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JONATHAN CAPE

## A DEFENCE OF PREHISTORY

G. E. DANIEL

ALTHOUGH prehistory is over a hundred years old, it is still young enough to require a defence — a defence of its place in the educational system of our schools and universities, and a defence of its place in the scheme of knowledge and its contribution to human understanding. The notion of the three successive ages of Stone, Bronze and Iron, a notion which has often rightly been described as the cornerstone of modern prehistoric archaeology, was first set out by Christian Thomsen as a scientific induction from museum specimens in 1819. The *Principles of Geology*, with its advocacy of uniformitarianism — and there could be no prehistory until the battle of fluvialists versus catastrophists had been settled in the favour of the former — was published between 1830 and 1833. The beginnings of Near Eastern excavation were in the 'forties of last century. In 1859, the discoveries of Boucher de Perthes in the Somme gravels, and of Pengelly at Brixham, were publicly acclaimed as authentic in meetings of the Royal Society, the Society of Antiquaries of London, and the British Association. The great antiquity of man as proved by the finds in the Somme and in Devon was accepted in that same year which saw the publication of *The Origin of Species*, and by it, wide currency given to ideas of evolution which would have made the finding of early man and his tools imperative, had they not already been found by two generations of antiquaries.

It is now ninety years since the momentous speeches of Prestwich, Lyell, Falconer and Evans in Burlington House signified the acceptance of stone tools and the great antiquity of man, and defined the scope of prehistory. Yet it is only now, to judge from the popular demand for books and articles on prehistory, and for radio talks and lectures, that prehistory is entering the general thought of the majority of cultivated people. In 1871, in the first edition of his *Primitive Culture*, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor wrote: 'The history and prehistory of man take their proper places in the general scheme of knowledge'. But it is only now, three-quarters of a century after Tylor, that this is really happening. Admittedly there were attempts at the popularization of archaeology and prehistory in the nineteenth century, among them a special abridgment of Layard's *Nineveh* for sale on the railway bookstalls; and there was a great demand for books like Lyell's *Antiquity of Man* and Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times*. But, allowing for all the changed factors, the sales and influence of Lubbock, Lyell and Layard were small compared

with the widespread currency of present day popular expositions of prehistory such as Clark's *Prehistoric England*, the Hawkeses' *Prehistoric Britain*, Woolley's *Digging up the Past*, and Childe's now famous trilogy *Man Makes Himself*, *Progress and Archaeology* and *What Happened in History*. Why is there this popular interest in prehistory? Is it justified, and is it worth while? Should all serious students of history and human geography, indeed, all interested in the humanities, read prehistory, and if so, what will they learn?

First, we must be sure that we know what we mean when we use the word 'prehistory' before we discuss its merits and demerits. Prehistory is that branch of the whole history of man — human history as Elliott Smith called it to distinguish it from history *sensu stricto* — which deals with man from the first moment when a developing primate can be given that name, to the time when written records are so common and reliable that written history<sup>1</sup> begins. The anthropologists and comparative anatomists define man as the toolmaking mammal with speech and erect posture. The archaeologist attests the appearance of tools from early in the Pleistocene, at a date which the geochronologists estimate as between 600,000 and a million years ago. Prehistory extends from this remote date to the widespread occurrence of written sources. The first written sources date from about 5000 years ago in Egypt and Sumeria, but the spread of writing through the world was slow. The great proto-historic civilizations which came into existence in Crete and the Indus valley in the middle of the third millenium B.C. possessed written sources, although as yet the writing of neither of them can be deciphered. The first written sources relating to the British Isles are the accounts of Pytheas's journey to Britain in about 380 B.C., preserved in later Greek writers, but written sources do not become common in England until the sixth and seventh centuries. In other parts of the world communities are still pre-literate, and might, by definition, be described as prehistoric. The study of prehistory quite obviously merges into the study of the contemporary pre-literate societies, and this is one of the many reasons why prehistoric archaeology and anthropology have grown up together.

Prehistory has, then, a lower limit long ago, and an upper limit that varies from place to place. The prehistory of southern Britain ended 3000 years or more after prehistory ended in the valleys of the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates and Indus. And the upper limit of prehistory is naturally no hard and fast line but a long period of time. To this transitional period of time when written sources begin

<sup>1</sup> Or history proper or history *sensu stricto*. It is worth trying to use 'human history' for the whole story of man's past and 'written history' or just 'history' for the story from the appearance of written records. But inevitably 'history' will be used in a variety of senses.



to be common, the term protohistory is generally applied. The protohistoric period in the British Isles lasted from Pytheas's journey in the fourth century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. — the time of the Synod of Whitby.

We have now described the scope of prehistory and the chronological limitations of this scope. What are the sources for writing the history of man during the prehistoric period, if written records do not exist? The sources for prehistory are sevenfold; in the first place, there are non-native literary sources. For example, in Britain, classical sources give us some information about the later prehistory of Britain. But non-native sources are of slight and dubious value, and in any case, as we have said, no written sources go back further than 3000 B.C. so that their value applies only to those areas which were still prehistoric after that date. Secondly, there is oral literature — legends that preserve through oral transmission over long periods of time, facts about the prehistoric past. Thirdly, there are the material remains of man from prehistoric times; this is, of course, the archaeological source. Fourthly, the facts of physical anthropology, and fifthly, the facts of language distribution and of linguistic palaeontology. A sixth source is the survival of cultural traits from prehistoric times; that is to say, the functional survival, for archaeology deals with artefacts that have survived in non-functional contexts. Lastly, there is a seventh source — comparatively ethnography, and one might even add an eighth, namely the natural sciences which recreate the physical environment of prehistoric man and describe the physical aspect of the past landscapes he lived in and modified.

All these sources have their uses, but only one of them, the archaeological source, is really of importance to the prehistorian. Indeed it is of paramount importance to the prehistorian, and this is why the prehistorian *must* be an archaeologist, although of course the converse is not true; archaeology and prehistory are not the same thing. Archaeology is the study of the material remains of man's past at all times in human history, and there is an archaeology of historic times as well as of prehistoric times. As T. C. Lethbridge has recently pointed out tellingly in *Merlin's Island*, archaeology is being constantly created at the present day — the rubbish tips of yesterday are the hunting ground of the archaeologist of tomorrow. The difference between the archaeologist in prehistoric and historic times is this; that in historic times the archaeologist is not the main source; he can even use written sources to date his remains and assign to them their correct authorship. In prehistoric times this is not possible, and there archaeology is the main and often the only source. This is why prehistoric archaeology is often used as a synonym for prehistory and why the heads and professors

of our University departments in prehistory are usually Professors or Lecturers in Archaeology or Prehistoric Archaeology, not Prehistory. But though the distinction is not sufficiently generally recognized, it must be emphasized. As Taylor has said, 'Archaeology *per se* is no more than a method and a set of specialized techniques for the gathering of cultural information. The archaeologist, as archaeologist, is really nothing but a technician.'<sup>1</sup> It is the prehistorian who takes the cultural information gathered by the archaeologist, and by any other sources, and attempts to recreate the cultural contexts of prehistoric times.

A third question that we must answer before defending prehistory is this: how are these sources — mainly archaeological — translated into prehistory, and what sort of historical writing is the result? We have said that archaeology is the paramount source for prehistory; therefore the main task of the prehistorian is the translation of the facts of prehistoric archaeology into history. The facts are the material remains — stone axes, bone chisels, hut circles, Stonehenge, tombs, temples, ornaments and so forth; and the prehistorian studies these in a variety of ways. He analyses their material and here he is much helped by the natural sciences. He analyses their form, classifying the variety of objects as does a natural scientist, and constructing sequences of development — the typologies or typological sequences of which one hears so much. These typologies are no more than the sort of sequence in which we naturally remember the development of, say, Gothic churches or English furniture. The archaeologist studies the distribution of his various types, and notes particularly significant associations of these types — significant and persistent associations of objects which betoken the characteristic surviving material industry of a particular society. The archaeologist also studies the chronological contexts of the objects, and groups of objects which he has distinguished. By these and other methods of analysis he reduces the archaeological facts into history and reconstructs the past life of prehistoric societies.

That is, of course, the real purpose of prehistory — to reconstruct the past life of prehistoric societies, and to construct chronological contexts in prehistoric times. To this extent prehistory is a part of history, as it is generally understood, with the avowed object of reconstructing the past life of historic societies, and reconstructing historical contexts. The prehistorian is then a specialist kind of historian, though many prehistorians would like to fancy themselves as something else, and are most anxious to draw over themselves the spurious mantle of 'science' apparently provided by close association with anthropologists and such natural scientists as geologists and botanists. Indeed Taylor has talked of the archaeo-

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Archaeology*, 1949, p. 43.

logist of today as 'a Jekyll and Hyde, claiming to "do" history but "be" an anthropologist', and would see this 'cultural anthropology-history ambivalence' as marring a clear conceptual approach to prehistory.<sup>1</sup> Prehistory deals with past preliterate societies, and it can therefore be quite easily studied in conjunction with anthropology, which deals with preliterate societies at the present, or with history which studies all societies in the past. It is the strength rather than the weakness of prehistoric scholarship that it proceeds from two existing scholarly disciplines.

To a superficial observer it might well appear that the only difference between prehistory and written history lay in the different sources at the disposal of the prehistorian and the historian. But there is a much greater difference because of the very nature of the differing sources. The reconstruction of prehistorical cultural contexts differs from the reconstruction of historical cultural contexts in two ways — two vital ways: in the first place, the prehistorical societies that are reconstructed are anonymous, and, secondly, the prehistorian is mainly concerned with the reconstruction of the material cultural aspects of these vanished societies.

The anonymous nature of prehistory means that it does not deal with named societies, peoples and individuals. The prehistoric archaeologist, unable to use for his descriptions the national, dynastic, and personal units of description used in historic times, must invent not only his names but his units of description. It is not only that the nations and peoples with which he deals are anonymous, but they cannot be distinguished archaeologically. The prehistoric archaeologist has to invent the patterns as well as the labels of his human groupings, and this he does by isolating significant patterns of material culture, and labelling them 'cultures'. This is not the place to discuss whether the material culture isolates of the archaeologist should be given the name of cultures. It is indeed true that all culture is mental and that the prehistorian is merely dealing with the material manifestations and objectifications of a culture. It is also true that the groups distinguished on the grounds of material culture may not in fact be cultural groups, but merely facies of a culture. But then, all divisions of men into cultures is arbitrary, as arbitrary and as convenient as the geographers' division of the landscape into regions. The real job of both anthropologist and historian is the study of man's culture, but it is convenient to approach this immense task by studying smaller units of man's culture.

The prehistorian studies units which isolate themselves easily because of their varying industrial products, their types of houses and settlements or tombs. Whether it be not convenient nor desirable to call these isolates cultures, and whether in fact we should

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Archaeology*, *passim*.

abandon this practice and call our significant and persistent associations of material culture by such names as 'industries' or 'assemblages', or by the names of the Fort McKern system, is another point.<sup>1</sup> Here it is enough to note that the prehistorian in western Europe currently calls his isolates 'cultures', and that he labels them with names of his own invention, names based on typical objects of the culture (such as the Beaker culture), or typesites (such as the Windmill Hill culture), or areas of distribution (such as the Wessex culture). This explains why the story of prehistory as set out for popular consumption is, in the first place, so full of apparently disarming sentences like 'man first invented fire . . .' or, in the second place, puzzling jargon like 'the Windmill Hill culture spread into southern Britain . . .' The prehistorian would like to be able to say 'three boatloads of villagers under X, Y and Z set out from the neighbourhood of Cherbourg and crossed to Southampton Water in 1949 B.C.'; but this is not possible, and of course, if it were, there would be no prehistory; the prehistorian would then be relying on written sources and be a historian.

We have said that prehistory not only deals with anonymous societies grouped into divisions of its own devising, but that it is mainly concerned with the material cultural aspects of these anonymous societies. This is again inevitable from the nature of the archaeological source, for what survives from prehistoric times is stone tools, bronze weapons, hut foundations, tombs, field walls and the like. We are accustomed to speak of the imperishable ideals of a society, but the prehistorian is witness to the sad fact that the ideals perish and it is the cutlery and chinaware of a society that are imperishable. We have no way of learning the moral and religious ideas of the protohistoric city dwellers of Mohenjodaro and Harappa, but their drains, their brick rubbish chutes, and their terracotta toys survive. It is in this very fact, namely that the prehistorian seems to be concerned mainly with varieties of houses and tombs and cutlery and safety pins, that many have found the greatest criticism of the subject. Prehistory is concerned, some have argued, with the non-essentials of human life: 'We do not wish to know', these critics say, 'about the types of safety pin used by the Early Iron Age farmers of France, or the details of tomb construction adopted by the metal prospectors of 2000 B.C. in western Europe; we want to know the essentials of their societies — how they lived, what they thought, what were their ideals and illusions.' There is some truth, and much distortion, in this view of prehistory. Pre-

<sup>1</sup> The McKern taxonomic system (J. B. GRIFFIN, *The Fort Ancient Aspect*, 1943) distinguishes *patterns, phases, aspects, foci* and *components*. W. W. and H. S. GLADWIN in their *Method for the Designation of Cultures and their Variations* (1934) distinguish *roots, stems, branches* and *phases*.

history is not concerned only with types of safety pins and tombs; it uses these and other facts to build up a picture of prehistoric life — how food was obtained, what sort of villages and farms existed, what were the crops and field systems and animals, what were the types of burial custom. Certainly prehistory concerns itself with the way of life of prehistoric societies. But, equally certainly, it does not speak about the spiritual, mental and moral culture of these societies. It cannot speak of the social organization or the religious beliefs of prehistoric society, and this is a fundamental limitation of prehistory. When prehistorians speak of the ideas and ideals of men before writing, they are making guesses.

Some prehistorians have attempted to break through this limiting factor by using two methods of very doubtful validity — the use of ethnographical comparisons, and the acceptance of evolutionary systems. Baulked of the detail of prehistoric life by the limitations and intractability of the surviving archaeological material, some prehistoric archaeologists have turned to the surviving pre-literate societies, namely the present day primitive societies studied by the anthropologist, which, as we have said, only just miss being classified as prehistoric; and they have sought in these existing societies a guide to the life of our own prehistoric ancestors.

To a certain extent the use of these ethnographical parallels is fair. The prehistorian has only been able to understand the nature of the prehistoric artefacts found by comparing them with those used by modern primitives. But some prehistorians, not content with inferring the function of prehistoric artefacts from the identity of form of prehistoric and modern artefacts, have gone further and have assumed that the identity of form between the artefacts of modern preliterates and the prehistoric societies means not only probable identity of function in material culture, but also identity in the social structure and mental and spiritual beliefs of the two societies. Now this assumption is fallacious: because the Magdalenian folk of south France have certain cultural parallels in formal material culture with the Eskimos, we cannot argue that they have the same economic organization, marriage customs, or beliefs about the after life. It is not even reasonably probable that the same form of artefact should imply the same kind of economic organization, let alone social structure, and mental and spiritual culture: and this inherent improbability is borne in on one the more one studies the variety of social and mental culture that exists at the present day among the so-called primitive communities of the world. In a word, as Ehrenburg has put it, 'it is a delusion to think that "experimenting" with the so-called primitives of yesterday and today provides scientific material for prehistory and history'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Aspects of the Ancient World*, 1946.



Evolutionary systems had been suggested for the development of prehistoric man even before the widespread acceptance of biological evolution made them seem 'scientifically proved'. The sequence of technological evolution from a stone age through a bronze age to an iron age seemed to demonstrate one sort of evolution. Spencer, Tylor and Jevons suggested stages in the supposed religious evolution of man, while Bachofen, McLennan and Morgan suggested stages of social evolution. Some prehistorians have accepted these evolutionary sequences as of equal validity with the sequence of technological ages associated with Thomsen, and it is from these equations that we find the Neolithic Age being spoken of as one of primitive communism, the Bronze Age as seeing the beginnings of private property, and so on. This process, the hypostasization of the evolutionary sequences, is as invalid a source for the mental and spiritual life of prehistoric man as is the use of ethnographical parallels. But whereas the facts in the ethnographical parallels are accurate, and it is the inferences from them which are fallacious, it is the facts of the supposed evolutionary sequences themselves which are open to question. These sequences were the result of nineteenth-century thought, which was predisposed to evolutionary sequences and arranged all social and cultural phenomena in such sequences. Subsequent anthropology has shown that many of these stages do not exist, and, in any case, their arrangement in sequences is pure hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>

We may not then turn to extra-archaeological sources to tell us the detail of the non-material life of primitive man in prehistoric times, which the intractable archaeological source cannot be made to yield. We must recognize this great limitation of prehistory which, as Chauvet said 'ne connaît pas les individus; elle étudie des états sociaux anonymes, dont elle décrit le côté matériel'.<sup>2</sup>

There is yet a third very real difference between history *sensu stricto* and prehistory, which immediately strikes the ordinary student of history when he begins to read books on the prehistory of Europe and Britain. In history we not only speak of named people and nations and religions, but we can assign accurate dates to events and people. In prehistory, on the other hand, dates are still very provisional. There are no accurate dates in human history derived from human computation before 3000 B.C. Before this date, before the approximate date of the foundation of the dynasties of Egypt and Sumer, there lies what Herzfeld has called Absolute Prehistory — a time when even the discovery of the key to all the at

<sup>1</sup> This is not the place to discuss the use which Marxism has made of prehistory, using the fallacious evolutionary sequences of Morgan. For an application of Marxism to prehistory see V. G. CHILDE, *Scotland before the Scots*, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Premiers Inhabitants du Poitou*, 1920.

present unknown scripts will not help us. Dates have been suggested for events earlier than this; such dates are 8000 B.C. for the end of the Ice Age, and 550,000 B.C. for the earliest human tools, but these dates are not based on human calendars and calculation but on geochronological techniques such as the counting of clayvarves, and the rate of decomposition of radioactive materials. Even after 3000 B.C. it is only possible to have an accurate and reliable timescale in areas in the Near East where records were being kept. In areas far away from the early Near Eastern centres of civilization such as Spain, Central Europe, Scandinavia or Britain, absolute dates have to be worked out by synchronisms. The occurrence of Egyptian imports in Greece, and of Greek imports from the same period in the same Egyptian contexts in Egypt gives a good example of the way these synchronisms are established, and indeed this very synchronism, first established by Flinders Petrie at the end of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the attempted establishment of an absolute chronology for the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages in Europe.

But there remains plenty of room for variation in the interpretation of the archaeological material and the significance of these synchronisms. Indeed the chronological equations are rarely so exact and convincing that we can say: 'This period of the Neolithic in Crete is exactly contemporary with this period of the Bronze Age in Spain.' What European prehistorians usually have to be satisfied with is the presence of foreign imports and not exactly dated synchronisms, and then all that can be said is: 'This period in Britain is certainly later than the date when these imported objects were made in the East Mediterranean.' Childe has shown that the date of the beginning of the Central European Bronze Age could be put as early as 2800 B.C. and as late as 1500 B.C. according to the value given to various archaeological imports, and has said that 'down to 1200 B.C. no date in European prehistory could be justified archaeologically by an actual import of Oriental manufacture found in Central Europe, still less by an admittedly European product in a historically dated context'.<sup>1</sup> It is equally possible to argue a case for the dating of the great collective tombs of Western Europe known as Passage Graves at anywhere from 1000 B.C. back to 2500 B.C. These are extreme examples but they serve to show that absolute dates in prehistory are quite different things from absolute dates in written history.

These, then, are the great differences between history and prehistory; prehistory is the study, almost entirely from archaeological sources, of the societies that existed before writing; it is the study

<sup>1</sup> 'The Orient and Europe', Presidential Address to Section H of the British Association, 1938.



of these societies mainly from the material point of view, and it is the description of them against a background of absolute chronology which is at most a working hypothesis. Why then should prehistory, with all these limitations, be a serious subject of study? I suggest there are six good reasons.

In the first place, prehistory is the study of the beginnings of human history. It may suffer from many limitations, and the picture presented may be imperfect, and may easily be susceptible of exaggeration or misrepresentation, but it is the only picture available about the earliest past of man. If we are to begin human history anywhere, we must begin at the beginning. Of course we may take the view that history is the history of ideas, and only becomes interesting or relevant or understandable when we can talk about ideas. If we take this view then history cannot begin before writing, for though it is obvious that the Palaeolithic hunters who drew and painted animals on the walls of the caves of south France and north Spain had ideas, we do not know what those ideas are, and there seems no way of recovering them. But if we take a wider view of history and regard it as the chronicle of all man's doings, then prehistory is its first chapter. And the claims of prehistory are not merely those of primacy and great antiquity. Prehistory does deal with the origins of things which are of great significance in man's history — the first careful burial, the first art, the beginnings of the wheel, the plough, agriculture, metallurgy, pottery, currency, ironworking, the first villages and their growth into the first cities. It is prehistory, moreover, that can tell us the ethnic elements in the composition of nations and states that appear when written sources begin. Before the development of prehistoric archaeology it was customary to refer to the inhabitants of pre-Roman Britain as the Ancient Britons, and in the customary formulae of the ethnic composition of the English we find Ancient Britons, Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Normans as the main components. But because of prehistory, we now see that the Ancient Britons themselves were an extraordinarily complicated amalgam of different peoples and cultures, some from the Mediterranean and Western Europe, others from north France, and yet others from the Low Countries and the north German plain. And if we want to study the essential personality of a modern nation we must first look back into prehistory and see the first patterns of inter-regional relationships and cultural groups being formed. Vidal de la Blache did this first for France, and his method was adopted with special relevance to the prehistoric material in Britain by Sir Cyril Fox in his *Personality of Britain*.

But prehistory is important not only because it deals with the beginning of things, but because prehistoric achievements are part of the universal achievements of the human spirit. Here is the second

reason why prehistory should be studied. The things with which prehistory deals are not merely old things, they are also things which must be taken into account in any estimate of human endeavour and achievement. The Palaeolithic paintings, the great Megalithic tombs of the Chalcolithic, the La Tène art of the barbarian Celts, to mention a few things only — these are vital things of interest and value to us today in assessing the long adventure of the human spirit. And to choose an example nearer home, Stonehenge and Avebury are not things peculiar and remote which only the archaeologist should study, but are part of the legacy of the past of Britain, and as much part of our heritage as Salisbury Cathedral or King's College Chapel in Cambridge. Surely it behoves us as much to understand the cultural contexts that gave rise to Stonehenge as those which gave rise to the English cathedrals or English collegiate universities. If the question be asked, 'Is prehistory practical?' in the sense, 'Does it help us to deal with problems of the present?' then the answer is on the whole that it is not, but the same is true of the study of much of history. But if a true awareness of the past of man is a desirable requisite for life in, and a study of, the present; that is to say, if historical perspective is a good thing at all, then that perspective must take in all achievements, whether they be the anonymous work of the nameless prehistoric men, or the named achievements of history. Prehistory and history are parts of one great study — that of man's past, though their sources differ and the cultural contexts they create are also different.

Much of the material sources which prehistorians study are the visible antiquities of the countryside — the barrows and camps that dot the face of the landscape. It is in the obvious nature of these sites that we may see a third strong argument for the study of prehistory. It is not that we ought to know how to look after these surface prehistoric antiquities; it would indeed be a curiously circular argument that said prehistory was necessary to prevent us destroying or neglecting prehistoric sites. But the presence of these surface antiquities, as also the chance finding of antiquities, is a challenge to the human mind, to man's curiosity about himself. It is this challenge which, in the early nineteenth century, brought archaeology into existence, and this challenge still operates to make prehistory exist today. It would be intolerable if we were unable to explain all the features of the cultural landscape, if we had to travel over the earth's surface saying, 'That is the ruins of a medieval abbey, that a Saxon barrow, that a Roman camp, but these barrows and camps — they belong to the prehistoric past and we can say nothing about them.' Prehistory is, then, necessary for man's full understanding of himself, not only from the point of view of his history, but from the point of view of modern human geography.

The relics of the prehistoric past are part of our modern environment: these fossils of a dead cultural landscape lie around us as we walk across the downs and moors of southern England. When we drive across Salisbury Plain in the late light of a summer evening, from Stonehenge westwards across the Winterbourne Stoke cross-roads to Yarnbury, we are surrounded by the remains of the prehistoric past — temple, barrow, hillfort — they are more vivid than any present functional use of that landscape. The perpetual challenge of these non-functional aspects of the cultural landscape is in itself a sufficient incentive to the continued and developing study of prehistory.

We have said, advisedly, that prehistory is necessary for man's full understanding of himself, and this is more than ever true when we consider the perspective which prehistory gives to the story of man on the earth. Before prehistoric archaeology revealed the long millennia when man existed before he could write, historians looked at the past with the distorted perspective provided by surviving literary sources. At first the distortion was caused by the literal interpretation of the Bible, and then by the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. The work of the French mission in Egypt established as part of Napoleon's conquest of that country, the deciphering of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, and the subsequent work of men like Lepsius and Mariette, revealed to us the ancient glory of Egypt which lay before Greece. The work of Botta and Layard and Rawlinson in Mesopotamia, and the deciphering of the Behistun inscriptions, revealed the Assyrian and Babylonian civilizations. The Sumerians were revealed by de Sarzec at Telloh and the Myceneans and the prehistoric Trojan civilization by Schliemann. The Minoan civilization was discovered by Evans in Crete in the early years of the present century, the great prehistoric civilization of the Indus valley by Marshall and others in the early 'twenties, and the Hittites and the prehistoric urban civilization of China at about the same time. And while these great discoveries were being made in Europe and Asia, the ancient civilizations of Middle and South America were being revealed by the patient labours of men like John Lloyd Stephens, Charnay and Alfred Maudslay.

A new perspective has thus been given to history by the recovery of the ancient protohistorical and prehistorical civilizations. It is no longer possible to speak of the origins of history in terms of Greece, Rome and the Bible. The perspective of historians, even those historians who eschew the purely archaeological source, must now be bounded by Egyptians, Sumerians, Minoans, Harappans and Mayas: and it is this new perspective which contributes to the world view of history given by Toynbee in his *Study of History*. But the

perspective of prehistory extends far beyond these prehistoric civilizations; behind the literate city-dwellers of Nakada and Ur of the third millennium B.C. are the illiterate villagers of Tasa, Judeideh, Sialk, Hassunah and Jarmo — the first primitive agriculturists of the fifth and sixth millennia B.C.; and behind them again are the Mesolithic hunter-fishers of the tenth millennium B.C.; and behind them, stretching far back into the Pleistocene, the early toolmakers of the Lower Palaeolithic. We see now that man was a food gatherer with a slight and primitive equipment of tools for at least half a million years, that the arts of agriculture and the settled life in villages only developed about ten thousand years ago, and that the literate civilizations of the Near East with their systems of government and religious philosophies are the product of the last five or six thousand years only — in that time which is at most one per cent of man's time on the earth. It is these facts which provide the new perspective of man's past given by prehistory. This, as Breasted once said very dramatically, is 'the New Past' of man; and this new perspective in itself is enough to justify the study and development of prehistory.

There are two more reasons why prehistory should be studied, and both relate to the nature of the archaeological sources, on which, as we have seen, prehistory depends. The first is that prehistory, as an intellectual discipline, provides entirely new techniques for the ordinary historian. The prehistorian has to work in the open air, not only when he is conducting excavations, but when he is engaged on those agreeable activities described generally as fieldwork — walking over the countryside visiting and recording and describing the different types of surface antiquities, and trying to see in the surviving landscape fossils, the buried landscapes of earlier days. The prehistorian has also to work with things, not ideas: he is constantly dealing with the products of man's hands, whether they be hatchets or ploughshares or beads. This is not to say that the worker in strict historical times cannot also be an open air worker — indeed historians from Guest onwards have been urging this — or that they cannot be concerned with the study of artefacts, but field work and the study of material culture are rightly second, in history proper, to book work and the study of non-material sources. When a student turns to prehistory he not only finds new vistas of the past, and a new perspective of human effort, but he also finds a new quality in the human past — the quality provided by the study of objects and things. To say that he is brought down to earth, that he is brought to deal with the simple things of existence, is to exaggerate and to sentimentalize; but he is reminded of, or initiated into, the technological and aesthetic elements in human culture, which often tend to be treated summarily in written history. Prehistorians can claim no

virtue in this technological and aesthetic bias; it is forced on them by the survival value of the products of man and his mind from pre-literate days. But they can justly claim that their subject provides a new intellectual discipline because of this inevitable bias.

My sixth and last reason for the general study of prehistory lies also in the limited nature of the prehistoric sources. It is because of this partial and specialist nature of prehistoric archaeological sources that it is so easy to pervert prehistory, and to read into the prehistoric story far more than can legitimately be read. The perversions of prehistory for political and nationalist ends were well seen in the writing of Nazi prehistorians, and can be seen again today in the Russian perversion of prehistory, or in publications like the recent Slav *Atlas of Prehistory*.<sup>1</sup> More subtle dangers lie in the interpretations of prehistory by honest scholars. There is a widespread tendency, encouraged by some prehistorians themselves, to put forward the view that written history deals with distortions, but prehistory with facts — that written documents always lie, but that stones and bones and bronze axes never lie. It is a specious argument, for all culture is mental, and the student of the humanities should note that there is a prehistoriography as well as a historiography, and that when he turns to writings on prehistory he should note whether what he reads is influenced by, for example, the environmentalist school of Fleure and Fox, the hyperdiffusionist school of Elliott Smith, Perry and Raglan, or the Marxist school of Childe. Let me say clearly here that I do not regard the work of these and other interpretative schools of prehistory as comparable in method or aim with the political perversions of prehistory. Without scholarly interpretation, prehistory would become no more than a chronicle of technological change in time and space. Interpretation is a necessary and welcome feature of prehistorical scholarship but it is important that the historian coming fresh to a reading of prehistory, should realize that these interpretative schools of thought exist, and that the prehistorian, no more — and in my view much less — than the historian, cannot say for certainty what happened in history and why. All is not prehistory that prehistorians declare to have happened; the spade is not mightier than the pen. Goldenweiser has put the value of interpretative prehistory clearly when he says, 'It is evident that human history during the last several thousand years is altogether too richly varied for us to believe that the only slightly less rich story of man before he began leaving written documents for professional historians, will prove essentially more expressible by such formulas.'<sup>2</sup> It requires a careful study of prehistory to distinguish the archaeological facts, and the

<sup>1</sup> K. JAZDZEWSKI, *Atlas to the Prehistory of the Slavs*, Lodz, 1948 (text), 1949 (plates).

<sup>2</sup> *Anthropology*, 1946.



legitimate cultural contexts to be inferred from these facts, from the interpretative explanations of these contexts: and this careful study in itself is a rewarding and useful discipline.

It is for these six main reasons that I would defend prehistory, and not only defend it, but demand its proper place in any scheme of education and knowledge. Some have put forward extreme arguments for the place of prehistory in education; Petrie once claimed that archaeology gave 'a more truly liberal education than any other subject, as at present taught'. and Grahame Clark has claimed recently that 'to the peoples of the world generally . . . Palaeolithic Man has more meaning than the Greeks'.<sup>1</sup> Others have demanded prehistory as a new subject in school curricula. The passionate overadvocacy of the place of archaeology in education may easily distort the place which a teaching of prehistory should properly have. There is no room for more subjects in the already heavily loaded curricula of primary and secondary schools, but there is an imperative need that our teachers of history and geography, those basic subjects of any balanced education, should be informed by the lessons of prehistoric archaeology.<sup>2</sup> Only thus can the perspective of history be extended in the minds of the young to include the prehistoric past, and a complete picture of early man presented as the beginnings of human history. Only thus can an intelligent interest be taken and encouraged in the material remains of the ancient human past, whether they be artefacts found by chance, like polished stone axes turned up by ploughing, or features of the non-functional cultural landscape like barrows and hillforts.<sup>3</sup>

It is at the University level that prehistory has claims to be studied as a separate subject, and here its claims are twofold. In the first place, the results of prehistoric research should be available for students of history and human geography, shorn as far as possible of archaeological jargon and technicalities. In the second place, either by special Honours courses or by postgraduate Diplomas in Prehistoric Archaeology, or by both, provision should be made for training in prehistoric archaeology, and for students to be taught, not only the historical facts that emerge from prehistoric archaeology, but the whole laborious sources of these facts, and the difficult and complicated methods of dealing with the great body of fact and transmuting it into history. But it is essential that both forms of

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquity*, 1943, 118.

<sup>2</sup> This is the official view of the Council for British Archaeology recently summarized by Lady (Aileen) Fox in *British Archaeology: A Book List for Teachers* (Council for British Archaeology, 1949).

<sup>3</sup> On prehistory in education see D. P. DOBSON, *The Teaching of Prehistory in Schools*, 1928; AILEEN FOX, 'The Place of Archaeology in British Education', *Antiquity*, 1944, 153ff; J. G. D. CLARK, 'Education and the Study of Man', *Antiquity*, 1943, 113.

instruction should exist at University level. The one without the other makes prehistoric archaeology no more than a collection of glib generalizations. The detailed archaeological and technological training without the prehistoric synthesis turns prehistory into an over-specialized academic backwater unable to contribute to or derive benefit from the mainstream of the humanities.<sup>1</sup>

But while I defend and demand the study of prehistory, I cannot at the same time defend all the claims and achievements of prehistorians. Boyd Dawkins in the late nineteenth century claimed triumphantly that archaeology 'had grown from a mere antiquarian speculation into a science'<sup>2</sup>, and there are many references these days to 'prehistoric science' and the 'science of prehistoric archaeology'. It is easy to see how prehistory has built up a claim to be called a science; in one way it grew out of geology, and so many of its early practitioners from Prestwich, Pengelly, Eyans and Falconer to Boyd Dawkins himself, were geologists. The Palaeolithic expert seems, even at the present day, to be dealing in the main with geological matters, and it might be possible to represent Palaeolithic artefacts as a special kind of Pleistocene fossil — until one thinks of Lascaux and Altamira. The adoption of techniques like excavation, field-survey, air photography, with their practical emphasis, has had the effect of making the methods of archaeology appear 'scientific'. The preoccupation of prehistory with material culture and with a time before ideas existed recorded in writing has suggested that prehistory is dealing with a time when the irrational factor of individual human personalities is less involved — but this is only because it is not known about. When all is said, the prehistorian is dealing with the earliest chapter of human history, and is as much a humanist as the historian, although his techniques may be different and may be pursued scientifically (i.e. according to common-sense rules). The prehistorian is not concerned in discussing the variety of nature and in deducing natural laws, but in describing early man and the workings of his culture.

The prehistorian must always remember that his aim is the writing of history although his material is so often the stone implements found in a section of gravel. In a recent and cogent criticism of American archaeology entitled *A Study of Archaeology*, to which I have already referred, W. W. Taylor complains that in America so many archaeologists are busy professing to be historians or anthropologists or both, but resolutely practising mere archaeology. Be-

<sup>1</sup> It is probably this avoidance of prehistory as a specialist study for archaeologists rather than a deliberately restricted view of man's history that makes series like the *Oxford History of England* or A. L. ROWSE's *Teach Yourself History*, begin with writing.

<sup>2</sup> *Cave-Hunting*, 1874, viii.



used by the sections of excavations and by taxonomy and typology, they never achieve the construction of prehistorical cultural contexts. It is not only in America that this happens. The task of prehistory is not done—indeed it is only begun—when the last detail of the excavation report is finished and the last object described and compared in detail. Excavation is, of course, the prerequisite of any knowledge of the prehistoric past, but it is only the beginning. The job of the prehistorian is only in part the accumulation of facts by discovery, excavation, air photography and field work. His main job is the synthesis of these facts into prehistory. A vast accumulation of technical excavational reports is not enough unless they are translated into intelligible historical form. The historian, recommended by countless book lists, and attracted by their excellent titles, turns to Childe's *Dawn of European Civilisation*, and Hawkes's *Prehistoric Foundations of Europe*, hoping to find a statement in historical terms of the beginnings of pre-classical Europe, and finds instead two learned and complete summaries of the archaeological evidence. The truth is that, despite its hundred years, prehistoric archaeology is still young, and we are only now beginning to achieve that synthesis of prehistorical archaeology into prehistory which, when achieved, will make the defence of prehistory superfluous.

In a recent editorial in *Antiquity*, O. G. S. Crawford wrote 'we are all dirt archaeologists, and proud of it'. But it is not enough to be dirt archaeologists. It is as though the historian said 'we all study Pipe Rolls and are proud of it'. It would be regrettable if the prehistorian were not a dirt archaeologist; but it would be equally regrettable if he were nothing more. The real defence of prehistory is not that it is archaeology, but that it transmutes archaeology into the early history of man. It would require less defence if more prehistoric archaeologists were also prehistorians.

## TWO CRITICS OF NIETZSCHE

PETER STERN

THE two trends of Nietzsche 'criticism' with which we shall be concerned may be called 'psychological' and 'enthusiastic'. And they are worth consideration, not in themselves, but because they are typical of current criticism. Our 'critics' are typical in two respects: first, because their views are extreme formulations of much that is written on this subject; and secondly, because both share with the world at large a disquietening lag of the imagination behind the words they write. But for this lag we should all go up in the bonfires of their loathing and enthusiasm. Because of it we still may.

## 1

It often happens that . . . a 'scientific' head is set on top of an ape's body . . .; not a rare occurrence among doctors and physiological moralists . . . Where someone sees, and looks for, and *wants* to see, only hunger, and sexual desire, and vanity, as if they alone were the real springs of human actions; in short, where someone speaks 'ill' of man . . . — there the lover of knowledge should listen carefully . . .

NIETZSCHE: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*

The first thing we notice about the 'psychological' approach is the simple fact that Nietzsche is dead. Only because he is dead is it possible to call him 'malicious and cruel to the point of sadism'<sup>1</sup> 'selfish and querulous', 'jealous' and 'schizophrenic'. Nietzsche is despised; but not enough despised to prevent a herd of doctors and novelists, psychologists and historians, professors, philosophers, politicians, parsons and journalists from making a living by despising him. 'With commendable clarity', as our 'psychological' critic puts it, they all crowd into the dark corners of a life more tragic than anything they ever turned away from, ostensibly to search there for what they had failed to find in the works, which in any case they had scanned only for the familiar Nietzschean tags. New details and new episodes are brought to light. Yet these innuendos, concerned mainly with Nietzsche's sex life and madness, are no more than a means to a nobler end. The prize goes to him who can 'explain' the 'erratic genius', to him who can uproot the tree and pull it down to his own, to our own level; the prize goes to him who can explain away what is beyond him by what is in him.

<sup>1</sup> This and subsequent quotations are taken from a review ('A Pernicious Philosopher', in *The Daily Telegraph*, (19.3.1948) by Harold Nicolson of H. A. REYBURN's *Nietzsche* (Macmillan 1948).

The argument is familiar. The critic, we know, need not leave his family in order to fulfil his purpose in life: therefore Nietzsche, who preferred solitude, is 'conceited'. The journalist, whose task in life is contained in the pun on the 'informing' of society, cannot fail to adjust himself to what he has all but created: therefore Nietzsche is 'a schizophrenic'. The world, a reflection of the critic's temperament, can only be the best of all possible worlds: therefore Nietzsche 'attributes to society the defects of his own temperament' (that is, his inability to bear with society). The critic's philosophy is to be consistent and sane: therefore Nietzsche, who wrote (as he says) 'with my whole being and with my whole life', whose whole existence was committed to every word — is 'demonstrably insane'. The critic, who is 'interested in the interaction of character and theory', finds occasion to repudiate only what is unfashionable and hence unprofitable: therefore Nietzsche, who, staking all, rejected one after another the empty shells he had outgrown, is 'one of the most disloyal people that ever lived'. The critic's moods are suitably adjusted to the calling he follows: therefore Nietzsche, who at the age of twenty-three was offered a Chair of Classical Philology, is 'tortured by envy and discontent'. The critic will recognize nothing but the interests of Fleet Street when it comes to breaking friendships: therefore Nietzsche, who would have no relation based on a lie, is 'rancorous'. The critic knows the solid worth of woman: therefore Nietzsche, who rejects the critic's well-meaning offer to procure 'one who might have been his salvation', is 'querulous and detestable'. The critic's pessimism is a pose which stops short of anything that could not conveniently be put into an article of approved length: therefore Nietzsche, who paid with his life for his intellectual and spiritual effort, is a 'pessimistic cynic'. And finally, even the critic is unable to escape the distorting mirrors of introspection: therefore Nietzsche — who wrote: 'It seems to me that the doors of knowledge are closed as soon as one becomes interested in one's own case', and 'Thus I began: by unlearning the compassion with my self', who saw through the tricks of psychology before its modern apparatus was invented — therefore Nietzsche is 'distracted by an overwhelming burden of self-consciousness'.

There are refutations which by their very completeness become irrelevant: to refute the 'psychological' critic from Nietzsche's writings would be to commit just such an irrelevance. A critic who does not see the qualitative, that is absolute, difference between irrelevance and confusion, confusion and contradiction, contradiction and that grave finality of thought, the paradox — such a critic cannot be refuted. To him philosophy is a static appraisal of traditional axioms, the mere internal coherence of the system a criterion of truth, the state of the philosopher's digestion the pass-key

to his work. Stripped of its empty rhetoric, the critic's charge is this: that Nietzsche is responsible for the National Socialists. At this point we must content ourselves with saying that the destruction of tradition and values which Nietzsche envisaged is far greater than the critic suspects: for it includes not only the destruction the dictators have wrought, but the critic's destruction as well. Our whole way of life — which includes us, the critic and the dictators — is rejected; so are all its impassioned evils and its placid good. But the simple truth is that those who wished to misunderstand Nietzsche had no need of him. For those well-read and illiterate gangsters who preached his vision of the 'Great Destruction' were, after all, only out to set the other fellow's house on fire in order to use the ensuing commotion to loot and to rape. Of Nietzsche's own vision they (like, in a different sense, the 'psychological' critic) understood merely that part which was within their scope even before they had heard of his work. And the undeniable fact that they grasped one part and the 'psychological' critic another makes neither nor both into a valid interpretation of the whole. To have one's most evil thoughts put on paper encourages one to turn them into the other fellow's flesh and blood. The critic, no more than any other member of the community, has the right and the duty to condemn the act of destruction. But in order to condemn Nietzsche the critic would have to read on, beyond the point at which the act is advocated. And only he who has read on is entitled to make Nietzsche responsible for those who, having stopped half way, turned to loot and rape. If our critic were one of those who have read on, his refutation would take longer than the hurried hour that keeps the printer's boy waiting for his manuscript. Reading on to the end could not have failed to convince even this kind of critic that *he* had nothing to say about Nietzsche. Nothing, at any rate, that Nietzsche has not already said about the 'psychologists'.

Let us restate the 'psychological' critics' position: The whole of literature is open to them, and they may slouch the highways and byways of all that is printed in search of a victim. They 'explain' a work of literature by means of everything its author has deliberately or intuitively eliminated from it; they 'explain', not in spite, but because, of this creative act of elimination. They are concerned with love-affairs and politics, over-drafts and under-currents, liquor and libido, Oedipus complexes and tailors' bills — but never with the written word. And these fascinating pursuits are not auxiliary, or additional, to the critics' only legitimate task, the criticism of literature, but their sole and exclusive method and aim. In the rare moments, therefore, when they stand face to face with the work itself, when its full and immediate force is lavished upon them, they have nothing to say. But their method has destroyed in them, not only all

capacity for discrimination, but also the sense of modesty; they cannot keep quiet, to say nothing would never do. And at this point there are only two ways open to them: aestheticism or abuse; and our particular 'critic' chooses both.

First, then, he 'admits' that *'Zarathustra* is almost a masterpiece'. Such an admission is indeed the worst humiliation any author could be made to suffer. Incapable of grasping the imaginative problem of the moral obligation inherent in a work of art, unconcerned with the complex and inexorable interdependence of its matter and form, the 'psychological' critic rips Nietzsche's work apart and turns the knife of his ignorant admiration in the wound he has inflicted. Compared with this praise, the avid gaping of the well-fed passerby at the spectacle of a dying mind ('It was not until he [Nietzsche] embraced the cab-horse in the streets of Turin . . .' writes our critic) is just a dig in the ribs. There is praise which should be given only by those who understand why it might be withheld. When the 'psychological' critic praises *Zarathustra* it is worse than if he had damned it too.

Let us now turn to the critic's second way out. The innuendos about Nietzsche's character have not quite 'explained' everything; aestheticism has not got us much further; so the critic turns self-appointed inquisitor, and Nietzsche is now judged in religious terms. A clerical writer<sup>1</sup> is circumspect and precise: his view that Nietzsche is 'intellectually wicked' is based upon a reasoned and specific exposition of the religious grounds on which alone such a view can be justified. Although the total argument may perhaps lack abundance, it is conducted generously and without bias; and, needless to say, the priest leaves Nietzsche's soul in peace. Not so our critic. His task at this point is to anathematize: Nietzsche becomes an 'evil man' with a 'satanic mind'. Not only is this condemnation much wider than the priest's, but what has preceded it has destroyed its justification. The 'psychological' vocabulary has failed, and the critic ekes it out with words whose true meaning has been cheapened and perverted by every line that has preceded this conclusion. For had their meaning not been cheapened and perverted he could not have used them.

To what extent Nietzsche is responsible for the National Socialists remains to be discussed. There is, however, no doubt that he is responsible (as much, at any rate, as Freud) for the 'psychological' critic. Although this is a debt our critic will not gladly acknowledge, it must nevertheless be said that he derives most of his stock-in-trade from Nietzsche himself. For it is Nietzsche who, perhaps for the first time, attempted the revaluation of all values in terms of psychological analysis. Yet *his* psychological reflections are only one,

<sup>1</sup> FATHER COPLESTON, S.J., *Friedrich Nietzsche, Philosopher of Culture*.

the least important, of his ways to truth. And to see in them the whole truth is (as Nietzsche well knows) as good a way as any of killing all sense of values. These psychological reflections are designed to catch out those whom Nietzsche does not wish to admit to the core of his work. For from these preludes (which are probably unparalleled in their precision and concreteness) he proceeds to place the Self (the object of his psychological investigations) in a world in which all being and all knowledge are one. This world he intends to be immanent and anti-metaphysical. This is the bid upon which he stakes his all. And at this point he fails. Yet this failure — inaccessible to all psychologizing, and explicable, perhaps, only in religious terms — remains one of the most fruitful failures of modern times.

The quality of Nietzsche's thinking admits of no dichotomy between his philosophic doctrine and his art; it cannot be conveyed in any exposition or résumé. Thus it may well be that in spite of their prophetic relevance Nietzsche's writings are alien to our age, when all that seems to get across from one person to another are *obiter dicta* but never the spirit that informs them, unless this spirit too is capable of being conveyed in a vulgar maxim. For where this spirit cannot be so conveyed, and at the point where it carries the maxim on to a higher plane, we are apt to ask, 'What *exactly* does he mean?' Yet it is just at this point, and by virtue of this creative act, that an *obiter dictum* becomes something else — perhaps poetry. To call the quality of Nietzsche's thinking poetical has its dangers: for both destructive woolly-mindedness and irresponsible aestheticism are sure to join in the acclamation; and ultimately there is only Nietzsche himself to tell both to keep out. Nevertheless, this (if any) is the label we would tie to his work.

Given this quality (but not without it) the failure of Nietzsche's metaphysics is important for two reasons: A reader who, safe himself from giddiness, follows Nietzsche's philosophizing, will be shown views of the human adventure not often equalled in their splendour and profundity. And secondly, it may well be that this very failure stands — apart from simple faith — for one of the greater modern apologetics of the Christian dogma. Our need of Nietzsche (expressed, at its lowest level, by the 'explanations' of the 'psychologists') is not the least significant of the symptoms of our weakness.



## 2

And lo, unawares Zarathustra came to the gate of the Great City; but here a foaming fool with hands outstretched hurried to meet him and stood in his way. And it was that very fool whom the people called 'Zarathustra's Ape'; for he had learned a little of Zarathustra's turn and cadence of speech; gladly, too, he borrowed of the treasure of Zarathustra's wisdom. And thus spake the fool to Zarathustra. . . .

But Zarathustra interrupted the foaming fool and shut his mouth.

Hold thy peace! Zarathustra cried . . . Wherefore has thou dwelt so long by the swamp that thou becomest perforce a frog and a toad? . . .

Thy foolish word harmeth *me*, even when thou art right. And were Zarathustra's word a hundred times right: *thou* with *my* word wouldst forever *do* wrong.

NIETZSCHE: *Also Sprach Zarathustra*

We now turn to the enthusiast's work:<sup>1</sup> our first reaction is one of shock. Having displayed his acquaintance with the major works of some two hundred and fifty major writers, our Nietzschean enthusiast announces that the integration of man — which is his chief concern — is to be found in giving the reins to, and fostering, the concepts of sex and power. These concepts are, as we shall see, somewhat qualified. Nevertheless this is the message which he discerns in all that is most valuable in the poetry (and therefore, his argument runs, in the concrete reality) of the last four or five centuries, in the New Testament, and hence in *Zarathustra*, the Newest Testament of Modern Man: 'Alone in our world-literature these two books have explicitly driven human integration to a deathconquering wisdom and strength!'

The enthusiast introduces his argument in the following manner: 'I shall purposely relate the central Christian fact directly to certain modern labels of pseudo-scientific psychological jargon in order to bridge the hiatus between past and present and heal the wound at present severing the body of living experience that should hold religion, art and science in one organic stability.' We need not stop to consider that such a method is a denial, in principle and detail, of the essence of poetry (for which language is more than a set of fashionable clothes). We wish to show this method at work in an 'imaginative interpretation'. The enthusiast aims at establishing a 'creative harmony' between sadism and masochism; he centres the human psyche upon and exalts a 'trinity of perversions'; he identifies St Paul's *agapé* with Nietzsche's 'heile, gesunde Selbstsucht'; he insists that in the Crucifixion 'we must suspect a sexual impulse, for any act that is not sexually generated is likely to be uncreative'; he launches out into the deep seas of speculation and proclaims that 'the creative artist *should* be preeminently bi-sexual'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. WILSON KNIGHT, *Christ and Nietzsche*. Staples Press. 15s.

<sup>2</sup> All italics in quotations from Professor Wilson Knight are my own.



and that therefore 'we reach . . . a most important conclusion: the bi-sexual consciousness is creative consciousness'; he speaks of Oscar Wilde 'as suffering from an extreme practice of what *should* be a tendency'; he warns us thoughtfully that to draw any sharp distinction between dream, or waking fantasy, and reason, is to split the personality'—and we must accept all this in the name of the freedom of the press. We should of course remember that the confident author has himself told us how seriously to take his book: 'If my following suggestions cause offence, . . . the irritation may yet be symptomatic of an advance.' In less oblique language the motto of this 'essay in poetic wisdom' is, 'Any damn' thing will do'. It may well be thought a trifle old-fashioned to call the views expressed in this book blasphemous nonsense. Nevertheless, it seems to me that to see our world as partly Christian, to wish to preserve that part of it, and *then* to advocate its advancement and 'rebirth' in terms of more sex and more power, or higher sex and higher power, or 'an ideal of a bisexual, love-with-power, integration' cannot, if words have any meaning at all, be called anything but blasphemous nonsense.

This is all we have to say about the book. At this point ordinary criticism would have to stop, for justice has been done, and no more remains to be said. But this unassorted collection of misshapen *obiter dicta* claims to be informed by the spirit of Nietzsche's work. This claim cannot be examined in the context of the present book, which is informed by a spirit of confusion and vulgarity. In order to examine this claim we must disregard the context of these maxims and give them a validity they in themselves do not possess. The justification for taking these reflections seriously lies outside them. For we believe them to be typical—in form and in content—of the kind of 'dynamic' and 'imaginative' thinking that goes on in many parts of the world of letters.

The present 'dynamic' doctrine is based upon a particular view of poetry. Poetry is seen, not as divorced from life, but as its motive power and guide. In support of this contention the Nietzschean cites, mainly, Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*. Now it would be possible to cite equally authoritative views, from François Villon to Rilke and T. S. Eliot, in order to prove the opposite contention: that poetry can play no direct or concrete part in a world which is guided by entirely different values. In doing this, however, we would—not unjustly—incur the charge of setting a whale to catch a sprat. The alternative is nowhere discussed, and we shall keep to the view that is advanced here. Whatever one's definition of poetic wisdom, it must involve an awareness of values, a capacity for discrimination, known at its very lowest (and as yet poetically neutral) level as good taste. All great poetry enriches our sense of values; and some may perhaps proceed to a rejection of them. Our author's 'imaginative

interpretation' attempts and fails to do just this. But acceptance, change and rejection alike presuppose awareness. And it is upon this lowest level of the argument that our author and his like betray a lack of discrimination which lands them in the company of those 'troglodytes' who, in beer-cellar and fun-fair arcade carried the National Socialist 'revolution'.

The parallel is neither unfair nor chosen arbitrarily. For the Nietzschean is prepared to accept the argument of power as the saving grace of our civilization by putting forward both vague and specific remarks about the 'dynamic forces' inherent in the National Socialist movement itself. He rehearses, in fact, all the arguments so familiar to a visitor in post-war Germany, in which some mysterious (and therefore good) force latent in the community is shown as having been accidentally misdirected: 'One should not talk too glibly of good and evil; and we should not be surprised at Germany's self-devotion, at some future date, to a pacifism as fanatically uncompromising as her recent militarism.' But he hurries on, beyond the point at which present-day German arguments discreetly stop and, having told us that 'Hitler remains god-like' and 'semi-divine',<sup>1</sup> proceeds to explore the dynamism — not indeed of the concentration camps — but of the New German Religion propagated by the egregious Professor J. W. Hauer.

In this matter of the Germanic Wodan cult (and indeed in any other instance that he might have chosen from among the recent manifestations of the *Volkswille*) the enthusiast's inability to discriminate is shown in its true light, even though we must add that he knows about it all only from third-hand sources. But to detect, in these bogus and self-conscious gatherings of middle-aged bank-clerks covetous of promotion in the party organization, 'a noble pagan system'; and to discern in this pot-bellied, torch-bearing buffoonery 'artistic virility and immediacy of impact which our own Church ritual cannot always claim', shows the quality of the imagination at work. The author might argue that as a man of letters. Thus he is not concerned with good and evil, and need not discern the perversity of this sordid and pitiful cult. Yet in matters of language he is equally undiscerning, and the perversity of the word is no less mysterious to him than the perversity of the thing. When he quotes and praises the *Service of Dedication* of this cult he does not know, of course, that the line 'Loyalty to the eternal "Die and

<sup>1</sup> A fuller version of this theory may be found in the famous *Six Theses for German Christians*, of which these are the first two: 'For the German People the time is fulfilled in Hitler. For through Hitler Christ, God the Helper and Redeemer, has become mighty amongst us. Therefore National Socialism is positive Christianity in action.'

'Hitler wants the Church. He waits for us. Achievement and success decide with him. Christ says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits"'.

become!"<sup>1</sup> is partly a quotation, utterly perverted in this or any other context but its own, from Goethe's great poem *Selige Sehnsucht*; one of the greatest of Goethe's poems; nor does he know that the poem itself starts with a single scornful glance at the 'rabble that scorns'. Yet he, a man of letters, has lived through the last twenty years without learning that the only meaning this misquotation can have is, 'You die and I become'. Or does he know what the doctrine of power stands for and yet approve of it? He admires the 'psychic freedom' the National Socialists are said to have given 'the nation'. He sickens us with the spectacle of his 'trying to see, or rather feel, National Socialism as it must have appeared to an ardent follower'. With a fluttering heart he gapes at 'the reserved dignity of the four guards mounting watch, day after day, year after year, over the memorial of Nazi martyrdom at Munich', and adds, to clear up all doubt, that 'such things were not arranged by hooligans'.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of it all, however, we refuse to alter our charge: we know that the enthusiast is a law-abiding citizen who would not harm anybody, and that the only thing which has to be taken seriously is his febrile muddle-headedness. For in a single sentence — 'That actual cruelty-enjoyment offends against the creative purpose of our era, and therefore our own deeper instincts, is shown by its incapacity of giving long-range satisfaction' — he reveals what he attempts to hide in a whole book: a wayward, febrile and yet weak imagination that fails to comprehend terror until it is brought home to it in tangible reality. And in a single expression — 'the compulsion on man to *listen in* to cosmic impulses' — is disclosed the quality of the argument and the situation of the writer who conducts it. Here at last, with the help of those perennial standards of language equally valid in use and abuse, the attack is brought home; and looking round the sitting-room we discover the familiar furniture of suburbia, the wireless turned on a little louder than usual. Apart from this wayward imagination we find merely a vague dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs, and an avid curiosity to know what would happen if we let ourselves go a little.

Is Nietzsche<sup>3</sup> to be held responsible for the troglodytes? There are

<sup>1</sup> It must be added that Professor Wilson Knight *does not* quote the concluding passage of the *Credo*: 'Only those can become members who are of Aryan descent and who do not belong to a Masonic Lodge.'

<sup>2</sup> Professor Wilson Knight might like to know that his views are not entirely original: 'You have only to watch the march-past of a few companies of the Reichswehr or S.A. to see those forces of the heroic at work which well up from the sub-conscious.' (ALFRED ROSENBERG, *Der Mythos des 20 Jahrhunderts*. 1934 ed., p. 579.)

<sup>3</sup> The fact that Nietzsche wrote another score or so of books might make us wonder whether *Christ and Nietzsche* is the proper title for a book that discusses only one of them and briefly mentions one other.

two answers to this central question; they are given by his own dedication of *Zarathustra* — 'a book for all and none'.

He is responsible for much more than the vulgar extravagances of his enthusiastic admirer. His work does indeed attempt to overthrow all the values created by the Christian aspect of European history, to open the half-demolished gates to the turgid stream of terror and lust for power. His doctrine of power is based upon a rejection of all values, and for him who is firmly rooted in the tradition which Nietzsche attacks there is, perhaps, in all literature no more powerful warrior against everything that passes for that tradition but is in truth a travesty of it. Yet that firm rootedness, in the teeth of Nietzsche's direct attack, is essential. Without it we get an exploitation of what is basest in human nature. Having rejected the Christian tradition as fully as any man can, Nietzsche attempts to create his own values. His 'revaluation' leads in the first instance, an emphasis upon the biological and genetic aspects of man, and a preoccupation with racial problems. This emphasis is historically explicable and therefore contingent to the core of his work, which is a rejection occasioned, but not caused, by his historical position. And this new scheme of values we must reject as totally as Nietzsche would have rejected it had he lived fifty years later; there is no proof of this contention apart from that implied in the quality of the total argument. Better than anyone else he understood the evils of his time. His 'revaluation' was to have been the great fire in which all would be burnt. The new Phoenix, he taught, would rise from the ashes. But the small fry were only looking for a small fire, a fire just big enough to stimulate their lusts, and that too they found in his writings. Because they found it there, and because his art, in the range of its appeal, is abundant but not discriminating, Nietzsche's work must be made responsible for those that come after him.

But his books are also written 'for none'. Beyond the first, Nietzsche establishes a second set of values: the *Great Will* that is inimical to, and born beyond, the will of the historical individual; the unquestioning and purposefully senseless *Amor fati* that is good because it is; and the vision of the *Eternal Recurrence*. These constructions, purporting to be anti-metaphysical, are necessarily outside the experience of anyone who would accept the biological values. But the acceptance of both sets must be preceded by a total rejection of all established values; and in this respect Nietzsche is blameless for his consequences. To him it is the rejection that matters, the rejection which, from childhood onwards, is implied in every line and in every thought. This, the 'exposing', 'conquest', 'destruction', 'death', 'slaying', 'suspension' of God, is the central experience of his life and work, and beside it all his 'values' are no more

than anaemic servers at a requiem. And the readiness of the present-day Nietzschean to accept either set proves beyond any doubt that he is totally unaware of that rejection which alone might justify their acceptance.

We are not, to be sure, blaming the enthusiast for failing to reject the Christian tradition entirely. We are accusing him and his fellow-troglodytes of a lack of imaginative awareness of Nietzsche's central vision: that there are no values left this side of despair; and that all 'new values' begin, not beyond a woolly layer of vague dissatisfaction and uneasiness, but beyond the most profound experience of despair that Nietzsche is capable—and at last incapable—of enduring. Instead, our author tries to 'regear our primal impulses naked and unashamed to the central mechanisms of Christianity'. And we must conclude that his various attempts to 'integrate' Nietzsche's vision with Christianity are at variance with that *Redlichkeit* or intellectual and imaginative honesty which Nietzsche himself (mistakenly, we have come to think) places in the lowest rank of his scale of values.

Thus the Nietzschean finds a 'curious paradox: Zarathustra bristles with Biblical parallels'. The moment we admit that Zarathustra has come to overthrow Christ, to replace Him and His teaching, the 'paradox' is removed. And this is nowhere more obvious than when the Nietzschean tries to 'integrate' Nietzsche's arguments concerning the 'necessity of evil' with the Gospels. In Nietzsche's works the argument is indeed full of paradoxes, for it is intended to start from a *tabula rasa*, from a point beyond all traditional values. But if his enthusiastic admirer knew what the Gospel says on the matter, his hopes of an 'integration' would be disappointed. For he would find in St Matthew's 'Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom offence cometh!' as 'powerful' a statement as any in Nietzsche, although, alas, lacking poetic ambiguity. But the Nietzscheans always prefer to talk of God's plan for Hitler, daring their critics to refute them. Without wishing to enter into these arguments *à la* Rasputin, we would merely point out that the enthusiast, who thinks that 'the Sermon on the Mount, as isolated doctrine, does not and cannot provide a sole guide to national and international action', and that therefore 'some new honesty, some new sanctity is needed', is not the person to tell us.

Nietzsche is as far as any man can be from wishing to 'integrate' Christianity with his own vision. To him Christianity is the strongest single force in the world: therefore he knows what he is attacking. 'It must be our own loss', he writes,<sup>1</sup> 'if we fail to turn the death of

<sup>1</sup> *Nachlass*, vol. II, p. 332 (ed. Kröner). All italics in quotations from Nietzsche's works are his own.



God into a magnificent *renunciation* and constant *victory over ourselves*.' And on another occasion: 'Yet Christianity is the best aspect of ideal life that I have ever really known; from childhood onwards I have followed it observing its course, and I believe in my heart that I have never been base towards it.'<sup>1</sup> To the Nietzschean, on the other hand, Christianity is fossilized and feeble, it 'certainly seems to have failed', and thus he does not even see where his mud is slung. He is not willing to follow his prophet into the wilderness, yet he wishes to share the dubious harvest of the journey. To him 'Nietzsche's attack is, properly, against the Church alone'. Even though Nietzsche should single out charity and altruism as the most reprehensible of Christian virtues (because, he says, they destroy the personalities alike of giver and receiver), his admirer consoles us: 'We need not, however, deny, that, in a Christian community, a generous employ of altruism will, and must, continue and increase.' He is, after all, at home in a reasonably well ordered community, has still the more or less stable background of England to sustain him, and he knows that his attack upon what sustains him will cause nothing worse than 'irritation'.

It is upon the *ruins* of all values that Nietzsche erects the scaffolding of his own metaphysics, the vision of the *Eternal Recurrence*.

Now I die and vanish . . . and in a trice I turn to naught. Souls are as mortal as bodies.

But the knot of causes in which I am involved returns once more — it will create me again! I myself am of the causes of the eternal recurrence.

I come again, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent — *not* to a new life, or a better life, or a similar life:

Eternally I come again to this self-same life, in the greatest things and in the least, to teach once more the eternal recurrence of all things —

To speak again the word of the Great Noon of earth and Man, to proclaim again the Superman to man.

I have spoken my word, I am shattered upon my word; thus my eternal fate wills it — as a herald I perish.

The hour now came when he that goes down must bless himself. Thus *ends* Zarathustra's down-going.

Karl Jaspers<sup>2</sup> has shown how manifold and contradictory are the implications of this vision. He points above all to the profound

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Peter Gast, 21.7.1881. (*Gesammelte Briefe*, ed. 1908, vol. IV, p. 69.)

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche. *Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens*, pp. 350-63.

despair over all things human and divine from which this anti-metaphysical metaphysic springs. And we are left to conclude that whatever sense attaches to it is ultimately inaccessible to anyone who has not had the same profound and annihilating experience. The present writer does not presume to offer an 'explanation' of what cannot, it seems, even be lived. But to the enthusiast there is no particular mystery in all this: 'Nietzsche clearly . . . asserts that both soul and body, the physical body, will be "recreated" and enjoy eternal recurrence, that is, live in eternity. His immortality-thinking *aims at* preserving the physical, following Christian dogma, St Paul's body-mysticism and Shakespeare's final plays (e.g. the physically warm resurrection of Hermione).' However difficult the problem is in Nietzsche, this misinterpretation of it is easily refuted. The enthusiast is trying to reconcile Christianity with that which attacks its central doctrine. A man either does or does not believe in the doctrine of Original Sin. If he does, he must reject Nietzsche's denial of it.

We may still point to the Christian foundations upon which all of Nietzsche's philosophizing is built, and to Nietzsche's debt to the Dogma. We may hold (though it would not suit the enthusiast's argument), and prove in detail that Nietzsche's utterly uncompromising regard for truth derives from the Christian tradition.<sup>1</sup> We may even claim that Nietzsche has failed to destroy the sense of eternity which is within him, and that the ambiguity of *ewig* (in *Ewige Wiederkehr*) testifies to this failure. It is upon these three facts that any book entitled *Christ and Nietzsche* would have to be based. But what Nietzsche '*aims at*' is indeed quite clear. And no one, in any circumstances however poetical, may take denial, or even imperfect denial, for intended affirmation.

It has been said that the enthusiast's concepts of heightened sex and power as the necessary elements in any integration of man are qualified. We may now ask which are the values (after he has pretended to be assisting in the destruction of all values) that qualify what is, after all, inherent in the nature of animals too. To this question we are given two answers. The first qualification is implied in the enthusiast's obvious and understandable unwillingness to follow Nietzsche into his anti-Christian desert. We must, we are told, simply make the best of both worlds, and accept the Gospel wherever it can be interpreted in terms of erotic symbolism. Where that does not work, and where the power concept cannot be 'integrated', there it may well be that Christ is wrong and Nietzsche is right. But this is an uninspired way of putting it, and the reader may prefer the Nietzschean's own words: 'The very emphasis Nietzsche lays on courage, on the body, on deed as opposed to thought, on the misery of being "merely a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. KARL JASPERS: *Nietzsche und das Christentum*.



poet'', points straight and uncompromisingly to Christ's unswerving and heroic course as a talisman outpacing all categories of verbal doctrine, all flashing coinage of prophecy; which does not mean that Nietzsche, after two thousand years of human — and, for all we know, divine — experience and speculation, may not have the best of it, here and there, where vital truth is concerned'.<sup>1</sup> For all we know the author too is in possession of some vital truth; of which the First Commandment, at any rate, is not a part; the syntax of his half insinuating and half asserting sentence however makes this doubtful. In Nietzsche's work too we find many obscurities and ambiguities. But their quality shows them to be the last refuge of a language strained to the limits of its poetical and philosophical resources, not the hide-and-seek of a double negation that does not quite know what to assert. The second qualification is as unambiguous as we can wish it. Discussing, as so often, Germany, the Nietzschean says: 'She appears powerful in instinct and transcendental perception, but weak in those integrating factors . . . which are (i) the sense of sin; and (ii) the sense of humour.' And Nietzsche, we must remember, will assist us in the integration. Whether or not Nietzsche has a sense of humour is of course a 'matter of taste'. Weak though our argument is (in the realm of *obiter dicta*), we would yet maintain that there perhaps never was a less humorous, or a less merry or gay book than *Zarathustra*. It seems almost impossible that a reader should fail to sense the despair, *nausea vitae*, and sadness that break through its 'joyous' songs; that he should not discern the failure which attends every attempt at humour, or gaiety, in Nietzsche's later works. But then our enthusiast, who (both rightly and wrongly) has been called 'this most Germanic of authors', has probably German standards of humour too. And as for the 'sense of sin', this of course is the doctrine above all others which Nietzsche attacks in Christianity. At this point, however, even an account of *obiter dicta* must stop, and we had better go for a walk.

Whence comes this lack of discrimination which the enthusiast shares with the 'psychological' critic? Everything in this kind of 'criticism' takes us back to this question. There are many answers to it, and some Nietzsche himself has given. One answer, at any rate,

<sup>1</sup> The following is a variant to this doctrine; starting from slightly different premisses it yet arrives at the same conclusion, although it has the merit of explicitness: 'It is the *life* of Jesus which, for Germanic man, possesses significance, not his agonizing death, to which he owed his success with the alpine and mediterranean peoples. It is the magnificent preacher and the man of wrath in the temple, the man who carried all with him and whom *all followed*, and not the Crucified, not the sacrificial lamb of the Jewish prophets, who today is the formative ideal that shines forth to us from the Gospels. And if it does *not* shine forth, then the Gospels too are dead.' (ROSENBERG, *op.cit.*, p. 604; author's italics.)

is at hand: it is to be found in the term *Literaturwissenschaft*. The term itself, to be sure, is little known in this country; but the thing, it seems, is well established. It is an attitude that deduces from the fact that something is printed not merely the critics' right but their ability to criticize it. We can all read, says one of them, there are no mysteries. We can all read, says the other, and all is mystery. But both claim the right to talk it over. And the ultimate criterion of criticism becomes the ability and leisure to read, and the wish to be heard. In these circumstances we may well call Nietzsche's work naive, 'for surely it is naive to entrust to the printing press something essentially esoteric'.<sup>1</sup> Yet Nietzsche's work is no more 'esoteric' than any other great writer's. Only the effects of the betrayed trust are more disastrous.

Thus it cannot be denied that there is something dangerous in the kind of thinking aloud we have been considering, although the Nietzschean himself is certainly unaware of it. For inherent in the portentousness and obscurity of his style there is an element of the pseudo-mystical, a sense of urgency about the wrong things. His positive evaluation of power need not, perhaps, be taken very seriously. What is important is the feeble imagination, which must be shown the manifestations of *Volkswille* and *Volksgemeinschaft* in a concentration camp or in a German hospital before the currency reform in order to grasp what the National Socialists stood for, and what it is to give 'the nation' 'psychic freedom'. It is an imagination which will go on equating 'the poet's symbol of gold' with economics, until it is faced with a criminal situation in which the price of a pound of bread is equivalent to a worker's wages for five days.

The sole tenet of this *Weltanschauung* is that something, anything, should happen. All it can discern and repudiate are the consequences. When a force which 'should only be a tendency' becomes 'an extreme practice', the enthusiast has his qualms; but again only about the 'extreme practice'. Such a philosophy of life is in fact the most explicit proof of what it denies: the divorce of life and letters. For wherever it is translated from the world of letters into the world at large it destroys both. The kind of imagination from which it springs is incapable of concerning itself seriously with the problem of values. But it is capable of undermining some peoples' regard for the modest and pedestrian virtues of life, for the virtues that make it possible for this book to get printed and sold. It is an imagination that turns Zarathustra into an unlicensed peddler in radical manifestos and erotic picture-postcards.

<sup>1</sup> ALFRED WEBER, *Abschied von der bisherigen Geschichte*, Hamburg, 1946, p. 189.

The first business of any critic of Nietzsche must be to have a clear vision of the right and wrong grounds for accepting or rejecting Nietzsche's world of ideas. In any honest attempt to read him there will be, first of all, a respect, and perhaps little more, for Nietzsche's mind and personality. Respect for a life lived by its own hard and merciless laws, yet lived upon the highest level of our own ethics too. Respect also for his profound suffering — for his is, in spite of all self-conscious merriment, the saddest and most tragic of all messages: the message that in him God had died.

Furthermore, such a reading cannot fail to recognize that we are indebted to Nietzsche for his unique insight into our own predicament. His critique is almost always specific, concrete and precise, never an ideology, hardly ever a *schema* that would generalize where no generalization is possible. His is a philosophy of reflections and aphorisms. And it may well be that (in its critical aspect) such a philosophy remains more closely in touch with the real world than the traditional system. Yet this philosophy too has a tradition behind it; a tradition alive in a small, retiring company of men, no more than ten or twelve in number, who sketched out fragmentary pictures of a universe which to them appeared as shattered and fragmentary. In the company of these men — and the names of Gracian and Chamfort, Pascal and Kierkegaard of the *Diaries*, Lichtenberg and Kant of the *Antinomies*, Schopenhauer of the *Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life*, Joseph Joubert and F. H. Bradley of the *Aphorisms* indicate the tradition — Nietzsche is at home, theirs is the spirit which informs his great critical work. And we must be wary lest calling his (and their) work critical should involve us in a negative judgment of value. Is not the sentence 'Ceaseless criticism never did anyone or anything any good' too simple to be true? Does it not fail to take account of the positive creativeness of great minds, to which denial and affirmation are accidental? For surely values are seen in, but not judged by, the works that exhibit them. It is precisely in his ceaseless criticism, at work even in those 'positive' constructions which are unacceptable to us, that Nietzsche 'does good'. His doctrine of power is of no use to us; our salvation lies elsewhere. But we owe him, and ourselves, the justice of not misinterpreting his vision, and of recognizing his concept of power as utopian: the power he speaks of is born, not from the will of the historical individual, but from a conquest of that will, from a will that is to be. As such it cannot be the precept of any community as we know it, unless we are prepared to exchange Christianity for it, and abandon all that is still good and true in our civilization.

And finally, Nietzsche the poet must receive recognition. We cannot postulate a crude system of correspondences. Poetry is not, as perhaps once it was, an integral part of life. The poetic mind is

faced with the alternatives of either betraying its divine spark in the service of an immanent rationalism or of the quest for power, or of retiring to its 'ivory tower'. Unless poetry is once again linked with life at the highest level — within a metaphysical principle — it can only illumine life with sudden and unexpected flashes. These momentary insights cannot be restated in any other terms, and all that criticism can do is to prepare the mind for them. To him who will accept them as precious gifts from a rich and generous imagination, Nietzsche will give more than his critics can determine. Leaving the subject of his sentence undesignated Plato says: 'There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing therewith. For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself.'<sup>1</sup> This doctrine of the ineffable the work of every poetic mind both acknowledges and denies. Its denial, however, admits of no rationalization, and of no direct application to our predicament. As to that, Nietzsche can only teach us *Redlichkeit*, the quality in which so many of his critics are deficient.

<sup>1</sup> *Epistles* 341 D.

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## THE BURIED LIFE

### *A Study in Matthew Arnold's Poetry*

J. M. COHEN

'I HAVE never yet succeeded on any one great occasion in consciously mastering myself,' Arnold wrote to Clough in September 1849, when his love affair with the shadowy Marguerite was, probably, at a crisis. 'I can go thro: the imaginary process of mastering myself,' he went on, 'and see the whole affair as it would then stand, but at the critical point I am too apt to hoist the mainsail to the wind and let her drive. However,' he resolved, 'as I get more awake to this it will I hope mend, for I find that with me a clear almost palpable intuition (damn the logical senses of the word) is necessary before I get into prayer: unlike many people who set to work at their duty, self denial etc. like furies in the dark hoping to be gradually illuminated as they persist in this course.' Arnold had an almost eighteenth-century distrust of 'enthusiasm'. 'Who also perhaps may be sheep,' his letter to Clough continues, reverting to those who make the Pascalian leap into faith, 'but not of my fold, whose one natural craving is not for profound thoughts, mighty spiritual workings etc. etc. but a distinct seeing of my way so far as my own nature is concerned.'

Here at twenty-six Arnold stated his problem, and within two years he had made two major moves towards solving it, taking two great decisions that altered the course of his life, and taking them less blindly than from his letter to Clough one would expect. He abandoned a spectacular but insecure career in letters or politics for the steady drudgery of an Inspectorship of Schools, and he put behind him all longing for Marguerite, the French girl with whom he had fallen in love in Switzerland, and had made a marriage into his own class and kind. Self-mastery was not in fact foreign to his nature, nor was he without 'a distinct seeing of his way'. Yet it is doubtful whether that way led in the direction he supposed, and more than doubtful whether the public figure that survived can compensate us for the poet who was condemned by these decisions to a slow and wasting death. Yet, before blaming Arnold for actions which appear to have robbed us of the poetry of a whole man and substituted a handful of poems by a backward looking ghost, we must examine more closely the situation that faced him in 1849.

The young Arnold of the Clough letters, the poet of 'Empedocles' and the lover of Marguerite, is superficially a very different person from the writer of the two volumes of factual



and objective family letters collected by G. W. E. Russell. The language of these early times is robust, the range of speculation wide; the poet is a Byronic figure, dandyish, a poser, and faintly patronizing towards his introspective, serious friend, who was so clearly marked out for failure from the beginning. It is interesting too to find him chiding Clough for just those faults which he shared with him. 'You say what you mean,' he wrote in reply to a request for an honest opinion of Clough's poetry; 'but in such a way as to leave it doubtful whether your mode of expression is not quite arbitrarily adopted.' The arbitrary form of Arnold's own would-be masterpiece, *Merope*, is such that the poem fails to say anything at all. Somewhat later he attacks his friend for writing poetry that tries 'to solve the Universe', a temptation from which the young Arnold was himself not entirely free. Clough represented for him at that time the side of his own nature that he had already, and long before 1849, condemned. The poet of 'The Bothie' was in reality no wholehearted romantic, but he was a man who would make no compromise, and intransigence was a romantic characteristic that Arnold could not abide; his own course was to lead him into many outward compromises.

He stated his problem once more in his sonnet to Wellington, written also in 1849, 'Thou,' it ended

Hast laboured with the foremost, hast become  
Laborious, persevering, serious, firm;  
For this, thy track, across the fretful foam  
Of vehement actions without scope or term,  
Call'd History, keeps a splendour: due to wit,  
Which saw *one* clue to life, and followed it.

Arnold too sought to find *one* clue to life and follow it. His purpose was not, like Wellington's, the leadership of men; nor, like his father's, the moulding of thought; nor, like Clough's, intellectual honesty at all costs. What he was pursuing was less clear as a course of action, yet clearer as an attitude of mind.

Once read thy own breast right  
And thou hast done with fears!  
Man gets no other light,  
Search he a thousand years.  
'Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee,  
at that shrine!'

argues Empedocles. In each man's breast is his own oracle. Deep in each man's heart is an intuitive sense of direction, which Arnold called 'The Buried Life', and spoke of in the poem of that name:

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,  
 But often, in the din of strife,  
 There rises an unspeakable desire  
 After the knowledge of our buried life,  
 A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
 In tracking out our true original course. . . .

The attitude is, for all Arnold's distrust of the romantic, a romantic one, that would justify the idiosyncratic extremes of a Blake or a Nerval. But it is more than that. The poem shows, as Aldous Huxley has pointed out, a realization of the pointlessness and squalor of the common life, and a longing for that one-pointedness of being and purity of heart to which the Scriptures signpost a way. He had lately found an early translation of the Bhagavadgita, and it is under the influence of what was, I think, a superficial reading of it, in the state of melancholy isolation that followed his break with Marguerite, that he came to his vital decision. In that extended parable the god Krishna preaches the disinterested action to the irresolute warrior Arjuna, loath to take part in a war against his own kin. 'Holding in indifference alike pleasure and pain,' he states, 'gain and loss, conquest and defeat, so make thyself ready for the fight; thou shalt get no sin.' The Inspectorship of Schools may have presented itself to Arnold as a post that could be filled in the spirit of self-abnegation recommended by the god; it may have seemed to him that to resign spectacular success and undertake hard and earnest work in the spirit of his late father was to be true to his 'Buried Life'. It fell in with the tendency towards passivity and disillusion which had always underlain the romantic extravagance of the young man who rejected romanticism. The poem 'Resignation' did not require the inspiration of the Gita; its disenchantment is the product of no deeply buried side of Arnold's nature. One suspects in fact a Byronic attitudinizing in such lines as:

Blame thou not therefore him, who dares  
 Judge vain beforehand human cares.  
 Whose natural insight can discern  
 What through experience others learn.  
 Who needs not love and power, to know  
 Love transient, power an unreal show.

'I admire Matt,' wrote Froude to Clough, 'to a very great extent. Only I don't see what business he has to parade his calmness and lecture us on resignation when he has never known what a storm is, and doesn't know what he has to resign himself to — I think he only knows the shady side of nature out of books.'

Froude's stricture was unfair. Outwardly very little had happened to Arnold, but for an unhappy love affair; but it was this unhappy

love affair, more perhaps than the resolve to be true to his 'Buried Life' that influenced Arnold's nodal decision. For I cannot agree with Mr Huxley that taking the Inspectorship of Schools was really a 'philosophic act' dictated by his desire to be true to his deeper self. He had in fact given up all hope of discovering his true sense of direction except in a relationship that should give him what he had lost with Marguerite. The conclusion of 'The Buried Life' makes this clear.

Only — but this is rare —  
 When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
 When, jaded with the rush and glare  
 Of the interminable hours,  
 Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
 When our world-deafened ear  
 Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd, —  
     A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast  
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again:  
 The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
 And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we  
     know.  
 A man becomes aware of his life's flow,  
 And hears its winding murmur, and he sees  
 The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

But even this sense of certainty may be illusory; union with a fellow-being may bring no more than 'a lull in the hot race', 'an air of coolness', 'an unwonted calm', in which he only 'thinks he knows The Hills where his life rose, And the Sea where it goes'. Marriage and exacting work were rather an escape from a problem of the urgency of which Arnold was always aware, an escape dictated by two of Arnold's most deep rooted characteristics, his melancholy disillusion and his dread of loneliness. Many of the desires of youth could be laid aside; the clamorous need for a woman's companionship could not: and a disinterested following of his life's 'buried course' might have led him into jobs or places in which it would have been his lot to endure alone the 'bad days' into which he had been born. The isolation in which he found himself, the vast wastes of incommunicability that sundered one mind from another, were, to his thought, peculiar to the age in which he lived. Feeling, day and night, 'the burden of himself', he had turned to Marguerite to free him from his loneliness. In the poem addressed to her 'In Returning a Volume of the Letters of Ortis', he acknowledged that 'we mortal millions live alone': in the 'Forsaken Merman' he pictured the desolation of one who took a woman from another world. The Gita and his father's example seemed to point to a life

of impersonal devotion to duty rather than a brilliant future in scholarship, letters or politics; a union such as he had momentarily known with Marguerite would be sufficient to make endurable the grim underworld of Victorian industrialism which he accepted as his place of exile, the limbo in which he had been condemned to dwell. Secure in his consort Nanna's companionship, the dead Balder accepts his long sojourn in Hela's kingdom:

For Nanna hath rejoined me, who, of old  
In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side;  
And still the acceptance follows me, which crowned  
My former life, and cheers me even here.  
The iron frown of Hela is relaxed  
When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead  
Trust me. . . .

Arnold was seldom parted from his wife's side in the thirty-seven years of their marriage, and missed her sorely when he was; and not only was he trusted by the wan Philistine tribes, to provide for whose education was his task in their murky limbo, but he grew to have great importance among them.

The decision of 1851, however, brought Arnold no nearer to his true life's buried course. His work in the early years of his inspectorship was, it is true, done without regard for pleasure or reward. 'You know that I have no special interest in the subject of public education,' he wrote to his sister, 'but a mission like this appeals even to the general interest which every educated man cannot help feeling in such a subject.' Soon it appealed to elements less indifferent in his nature. 'I find more and more', he wrote to his mother after a successful Oxford lecture, 'that I *have* influence.' After his first lectures as Professor of Poetry at Oxford he was as much a public figure as if he had continued in a literary or political career. Disraeli flattered him — not too subtly — at Baroness de Rothschild's dinner table; he was acclaimed at home and abroad as Britain's great literary critic, and as something of a prophet of the coming age, while his reluctance to appear on public platforms, or make pronouncements for Liberal or Tory, earned him a reputation for austerity, higher than the transient renown of most political figures. 'You are the most inaccessible man I know,' Gladstone said to him, on meeting him in the street. 'Now can you come to tea with me at half past five this evening to meet the Duke of Sermoneta?' 'I could not,' Arnold wrote to his sister, 'for the carriage was ordered to meet me, but his asking me showed his friendly feeling.' His weaknesses had found him out. Willing to face any deprivation except that of comfort and human intimacy, he had fallen into a way of life in which he was never alone; disciplining his emotions in the

interest of a settled domesticity, he had cut himself off from the sources of poetry within himself; seeking a life of anonymous hard work, he had exchanged the poet's homespun for the frock coat of the prophet. The change of garb may have brought him some gain; for us, however, it represents a pure loss.

Arnold's poetry written after the age of thirty is no more than a waste product of his public life. Not that the poet ever deliberately renounced poetry. In 1861 he was resolving to abandon criticism and give his next ten years to it. He repeated his resolve in 1863; but the poem 'Thyrsis', in memory of his former friend Clough, though already begun, was another three years in the writing. Later in 1863 he wrote to his mother that he meant 'to do some poetry and to ripen'. Yet the rest of his life yielded only two or three poems of any consequence. The reason was perhaps not plain to him, for twenty years later he was still wondering whether any more poetry would come to him. It was a defect in this postulated ripening that drained his inspiration, for everything he wrote that was informed with any depths of feeling was anchored in the experiences of his youth. Clough and Marguerite were reflected in his poems, his wife and children never, and even in the early volumes it is when he looks back on a golden age, his own or the world's, or peers forward into a problematical future, that his poetry is rich. The present is a grim era of Philistinism and insecurity, only fit to be flayed by the sterile tongue of prophecy. Arnold, the poet, was in fact a romantic, while Arnold the public figure stood for classicism and restraint; and this contradiction, which Goethe was able to synthesize in poetry of classical form but romantic content, in *Iphigenie* and in *Tasso*, admitted of no compromise for Arnold. His counterpart to Goethe's classical drama, *Merope*, is an intellectual creation entirely devoid of poetry, and all his more ambitious poems fail through his refusal to transfer his feelings to his characters. The position of Tristram between the two Iseults was his own between Marguerite and his wife, but the poem is a faded pre-Raphaelite embroidery, devoid of all drama, and it is only by inadvertence that he finally identified himself with the Balder of 'Balder Dead': the poem had been conceived as an exercise in Homeric story telling, as had 'Sohrab and Rustum', though this latter was enriched by its associations with the mingled rivalry and admiration of his childhood relations with his own father.

At his best, however, Arnold is much more than the poet of romantic nostalgia, and more than a story teller. 'My poems', he wrote to Clough, 'have weight, I think, but little or no charm. Werther, René and such like, none of them analyse the modern situation in its true blankness and barrenness and unpoetryness.' But the 'Scholar Gipsy' has charm, and though it doesn't analyse the



modern situation, it states Arnold's own blank predicament with a very rare insight. Glanvil's scholar is not only a nostalgic picture of an Arnold who had stayed young and at Oxford, a Sohrab who had defeated his overwhelming father, he is also the man Arnold might have been had he found the clue to the 'Buried Life', for that was the secret to be learnt from the gipsy lore, only to be preserved by one who fled the feverish contact of the modern world, the infection of its mental strife.

— No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours.

For what wears out the life of mortal men?

'Tis that from change to change their being rolls:

'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,  
And numb the elastic powers.

Arnold was early weighed down by a sense of age. Partly through identification with his father, who had died of heart disease at forty-six, partly because he had deliberately placed his youth behind him, he was always conscious of the shortness of life, and already by his middle thirties was beginning to think of himself as an ageing man. The secret of perpetual youth was the Scholar's reward for preserving 'but *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire'; but for that he would long since have been 'numbered with the dead'. Arnold's own distractions were robbing him of an immediate intuition of the reality behind appearances, and of inspiration; he had no firm hold on his faith. Not that he was prepared to make a public proclamation of his gropings, like his 'morbidly conscientious' friend Clough; or fight the battle of belief and despair in the open, like the Tennyson of 'In Memoriam'. He was always outwardly a religious man, preoccupied with questions of dogma and biblical criticism, and with the historical mission of Christianity. 'I have said', he wrote in his Marcus Aurelius essay, 'that religious emotion has the power to *light up* morality'; yet he agrees with the Roman Emperor that 'the prime principal in man's constitution is the social' — a standpoint in direct contradiction to the religious. A faith that exists to light up morality is no faith, and in the 'Grande Chartreuse' stanzas, confronted with a living religious body, he is overwhelmed by self-pitying comparisons. Yet again he blames his emotional barrenness on the age in which he lives. But so little does he question the scientific assumptions of his contemporaries that he supposes them capable of outdating an age-old faith:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

Their faith, my tears, the world divide;  
I come to shed them at their side.

But the Carthusians did not need the poet's tears. For them Christ was not dead, nor were they in need of Obermann's assurance that 'the world's great order' was about to dawn afresh, an assurance that the prophetic Arnold only accepted between bouts of pessimism. The undogmatic religion of service, the forerunner of this new order, which he accepted in 'Obermann once more' and in 'Rugby Chapel', was fortunately not all that he had to rely on. The 'Scholar Gipsy' waited 'for the spark from Heaven', and despite his abject picture of himself as one of those 'Who hesitate and falter life away, And lose tomorrow the ground won today', Arnold waited for it too — and not always in vain. 'Today I am forty-one,' he wrote to his mother, prompted to self-examination by the news of Thackeray's death, 'the middle of life in any case, and for me perhaps much more than the middle. I have ripened, and am ripening so slowly that I should be glad of as much time as possible, yet I can feel, I rejoice to say, an inward spring which seems more and more to gain strength, and to promise to resist outward shocks if they must come, however much.' From this inward spring, 'which threatens to depart if one will not leave it in mystery', bubbled a trickle of faith, very different from the broad channels of historical belief discussed by Arnold in his lectures; it was a faith not in the future but in the potentialities of the present. The Signal Tree of 'Thyrsis' is its symbol, a sign that his own intuitive life still survived; for the poem is not so much an elegy for Clough, from whom he had grown very distant in the years since his marriage, as a proclamation that the 'Scholar Gipsy', the incarnation of Arnold's own youthful inspiration, still haunted the landscape of his youth. 'One has the feeling, you say', he wrote to J. C. Shairp, 'if one reads the poem as a memorial poem, that not enough is said about Clough in it; I feel this so much that I do not send the poem to Mrs Clough. Still Clough had this idyllic side, too; to deal with this suited my desire to deal again with the Cumnor country . . .' It was Arnold who had this idyllic side, and it was intimately bound up with those villages around Oxford where he had walked, with Clough, as an undergraduate; just as parts of French Switzerland were closely associated with another side of Arnold's emotional life, which he had firmly put behind him by his decision of 1851. 'Thyrsis' bears witness to a spark in Arnold that was not extinguished by the deliberately chosen restrictions that he had imposed on his feelings; a faith was still alive which could not be spoken of in theological terms but must be expressed in the more revealing, yet fundamentally more mysterious, language of poetry. In bidding farewell to Thyrsis,

who lives yet in 'a boon southern country', he draws promise of his own survival.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here  
 Sole in these fields; yet will I not despair;  
 Despair I will not, while I yet descry  
 'Neath the soft canopy of English air  
 That lonely Tree against the western sky.  
 Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,  
 Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!  
 Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,  
 Woods with anemonies in flower till May,  
 Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

He was able to gain less comfort from his farewell to thoughts of Marguerite, written on 'The Terrace at Berne' during a visit to Switzerland with his wife. She was no more than a painful memory, a reminder of man's transience and isolation, and one that must be extinguished by supposing her dead or changed by passage 'through the crucible of time'. The poem is weak because here Arnold refused to face the fact that his emotions remained deeply anchored in past situations, in his uneasy friendship with Clough, in his hesitating love for Marguerite and in his former faith in the possibility of finding a clue to the 'Buried Life'. Nothing that happened afterwards inspired great poetry: the loss of his brother Walter inspired a mediocre poem, later events inspired none, and finally his output was so reduced that in the last twenty years of his life he wrote none but occasional verse celebrating the deaths of family pets, and one tedious 'state poem' on the burial of his friend the Dean of Westminster. The experiences on which he had drawn for his poetry were too far behind him, and no events of his later life moved him in the old way. Was the Signal Tree still standing? The letters bear witness to an increasing preoccupation with politics and external events. Foreign educational experts were interviewed, reports were written, and private words dropped into ministerial ears on country house visits. Provincial towns, and all America to the Middle West were lectured on the alternatives of Culture or Anarchy, Hebrew or Hellene: Arnold had indeed a growing influence, though no power to check the drift of events in directions that he foresaw and feared. 'If I live to be eighty', he wrote in abject pessimism, 'I shall probably be the only person left in England who reads anything but newspapers and scientific publications.' By 1902 things had certainly not come to that pass, but 'the blankness and barrenness and unpoetryness' that he found in the modern situation was not decreased by his prophetic tours. By his poetry it was; for us the Signal Tree is standing still, and the line of the Oxus, plotted

at the close of 'Sohrab and Rustum', stands as a prophetic symbol for the course of Arnold's own life. In his youth,

he flowed

Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,  
Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents; that for many a league  
The shorn and parcelled Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles —  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
A foil'd circuitous wanderer: — till at last  
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new bath'd stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

The 'foiled circuitous wanderer' we know; but the 'long'd for dash of waves' we do not hear, nor can we witness his mingling with the bright and tranquil waters of that final sea.

Arnold's achievement is small; in output or range of experience he cannot be compared with Tennyson or Browning, nor is his technical mastery ever the equal of theirs, or of that great innovator's, Gerard Manley Hopkins. He is one of those we tend to blame for abandoning poetry for other and, to us, less vital pursuits; it is possible to view his resolution of 1851 as the counterpart of Rimbaud's trading mission to Abyssinia, as the denial of a vocation. But if a poet is to remain a poet throughout his life, he must again and again renew his inspiration in fresh experience: there is not one Goethe but many; a second Keats was emerging in the second 'Hyperion'; a second Shelley in 'The Triumph of Time'. Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning exhausted their original capital and tried to go on trading on the small change. The romantic poet was but one of Arnold's personalities, and ultimately not the dominant one; for, without a Shelleyan rebellion against the standards of morality and social responsibility that he accepted from his father, he could not give his emotions the free play necessary to store up a fresh hoard of poetic capital. That he was not bankrupt, however, is clear from 'Thyrsis'; that he had not the resources for a major venture we learn to our cost from *Merope*; that he failed to find the clue to his 'Buried Life' we more than suspect; but that he was a true poet the evidence of his shorter poems and of 'Sohrab and Rustum' leaves us in no doubt.

EXEMPLAR VITAE HUMANAЕ<sup>1</sup>*Leone Ebreo and Uriel da Costa*

H. J. K. RIDDER

Time hath pierced my heart with a sharp arrow and cloven my inmost reins.  
 He hath pierced me and past cure is his wound, he hath bruised me and  
 made my grief everlasting.

ALMOST five hundred years have passed since 'the wise Don Jehuda Abrabanel' began his *Complaint against the Time* with this cry of overwhelming affliction. In the history of European philosophical thought, Jehuda Abrabanel, under the name of Leone Ebreo, was, as the author of the *Dialoghi d'Amore*,<sup>2</sup> the first man to bring antiquity and the Jewish world together in the spirit of the Renaissance. It is mainly owing to Carl Gebhardt that this platonic thinker and artist, who tried to give reality to the conception of Jewry as a part of Europe in the Renaissance, has been rediscovered<sup>3</sup> and duly placed beside better-known figures in the history of philosophy, such as Philo, Ibn Gebirol, Maimonides and Spinoza, who made similar attempts in their respective eras. Thus Gebhardt has reintroduced us to one whose genius helped to form the civilization of the Renaissance and in his time strongly influenced even the creator of Don Quixote and the poet of the *Lusiads*.

Regrettably enough, the general philosophy of the present day has not very much to say about Leone; legal philosophy has not even taken notice of him. Yet, an appreciative approach to, and an understanding love of Leone's world might enable us to leave behind all that is merely historically and individually accidental in him. In this way one might well become aware of the mysterious undercurrent of Time running through the centuries in periodic rhythm, which, like all rhythm in human life, again and again brings about similar, but never equivalent, happenings. If Leone is compared with that other Jewish thinker of the same Sephardic descent and intellectual origin, Uriel da Costa,<sup>4</sup> whose gloomy figure casts

<sup>1</sup> The author is much indebted to Mr G. Lee of St John's College, Cambridge, for help in preparing this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'Amore* — Hebräische Gedichte, ed. with biography, etc., by CARL GEBHARDT, Curis Societatis Spinozanae, Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Gebhardt discovered an edition of the *Dialoghi* when looking through the 161 volumes which formed Spinoza's library. An English translation was published in 1937 by the Soncino Press.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Schriften des Uriel da Costa*, with introduction, translation and notes, ed. CARL GEBHARDT, Curis Societatis Spinozanae, Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1922.



a shadow on the history of modern thought, the picture will gain an even greater degree of clarity. The lives of both Leone and Uriel, worth studying if only because of their vivid personal interest, at the same time embody the problems of their people and symbolize the spiritual situation of a period of transition between two intellectual eras.

The house of the Abrabanel belonged to the most distinguished families of the Sephardim, those Spanish Jews who were mixed with Teutonic immigrants. There was a tradition in this family, dwelling at Sevilla, which traced its origin back to David. Jehuda's father, Jizchaq Abrabanel, known as the last eminent biblical commentator of the Jewish Middle Ages, was born in 1437 at Lisbon after his family had left Spain. He was an active man, accustomed to society, experienced in business as well as acquainted with philosophy. Jehuda, born in 1460, grew up in a family which regarded the orthodox Jewish doctrine of the Scripture as essential, but none the less held Christian philosophy and Graeco-Roman antiquity in high esteem. It was a prosperous family, and it lived under the peaceful government of a sober-minded sovereign, Afonso V. Jehuda pursued medical studies and enjoyed a broad general education.

In 1483 the Abrabanel was implicated in a political conspiracy and had to return to Castile. Then came the fateful year 1492 when distress befell Spanish Jewry. Some time before, part of the Jewish population had already had to undergo compulsory baptism, but they were not forbidden to mix with their former fellow-believers. Now, the Catholic Kings intended to achieve complete absorption of the Jewish element, which at the time amounted to as much as a tenth of the whole population of Spain. Their decree of March 31st, 1492, expelled all Jews from Spain under penalty of death, unless they submitted to baptism. This was the beginning of the Sephardic tragedy. Some three hundred thousand people left Spain, preferring to go into exile of their own accord. The Abrabanel went to Naples, where Leone first came under the influence of the Italian Renaissance and the Humanism of the Quattrocento, an influence so decisive for his later development. As a medical man of outstanding qualities he was soon at home in the country. Pico della Mirandola brought the devoted admirer of Plato into touch with the Accademia Platonica of Florence.

In the meantime, in Portugal too, a brutal policy of assimilation had begun. Leone's little five-year-old son, whom he had left there, was baptized without his knowledge. Leone gives a touching account of his feelings about this barbarous encroachment in the *Complaint against Time*: 'The darling of my soul was taken away from me and its good name which had been my father's name...' (*Complaint*, V. 41). But affliction gave his work maturity and

bestowed on the language of the *Dialoghi* a poetic power and a sublime peace which foreshadows, like a presentiment, Spinoza's 'all-einigen' peace.

Very soon afterwards the Spanish Inquisition extended its anti-Jewish activities to the Aragonese realm of both the Sicilies. In 1506 the Jews in Naples under a royal decree had to wear the discriminating 'tundo rosso'. Thereupon followed an ordinance by virtue of which claims of Jews against Christians were annulled. In 1509 the Inquisition officially established itself in Naples, and by 1515 all Jews, except some 200 families, including the new Christians, were expelled. Leone however was granted a privilege which enabled him to settle down at Naples once more, as the court was anxious to benefit from his medical knowledge. Highly honoured because of his successes in the medical profession and his *Dialoghi*, a wealthy man, he succeeded in living in harmony with the surrounding world. Leone is a typical example of the early emigrant who, since his intellectual power is still unbroken and his spiritual possessions have not yet suffered heavy losses, is capable of such an achievement.

The strong-point in Leone is the consistent character of his Jewish religious feeling, the union of the Jewish conception of God and of the world. The predominant factor is the 'law'. Religion (in the original sense of 'religio') is *the* law. This method of thought is bound to one category. There is no difference between divine and temporal law, nor is there any other division. The laws of God for the people of God embrace everything. There was no antinomy of law and morals among these people, who, in spite of their closeness to their hosts, lived as though cut off from them by a glass partition. These hosts, by the way, in the Middle Ages, showed a certain understanding of this intellectual segregation, for they themselves lived in a somewhat similar unity of faith and morals which no one questioned.

Now Leone was the first-born of a period of transition between two main eras of European civilization. His outlook was sound and in the best sense naïve. By means of the Italian Renaissance he was able to make the tenets of antique philosophy his own and thus to penetrate the wall of partition. He was by no means a decadent and eclectic *bel-esprit*, but a vigorous genius who amalgamated with the Jewish tradition the values of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Plato's teaching about Eros, the Panpsychism of Averröes, the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the soul and the Renaissance cult of the Beautiful. In his mind and writings there is that kind of masterful syncretism which always marks the first important attempt to form a new 'weltbild' which is later to become the prevailing feature of an epoch.

Leone took over the Aristotelian triad of values, and opposed to

the fictitious values the true value: a contemplative life which, however, does not amount to a denial or negation of the existing world. Everything in the world is animated by the love of God and tends towards union with God. Every object in the visible world is a reflection of divine love, namely the love between matter and form. Whoever recognizes this love, and the love of God above it, already does right. This thesis of the original bond between Will and Reason throws a bridge from Socrates to Spinoza's doctrine of identity. God, the all-embracing love, is not only the idea of the Good as with Plato, but, primarily, of the Beautiful; Leone places aesthetics above metaphysics. With him the medieval antithesis of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* changes into a new one of *bello bellificante* and *bello bellificato*. 'The *bello bellificante*, the father of Beauty, is the supreme Wisdom and the ideal original state. The *bello bellificato*, the son of this Beauty, is the created Universe . . .' — the world 'sotto specie di bello'.

But how can there be in this cosmos any motion towards God, seeing that God is already absolute and perfect? And how can human behaviour within the frame of this cosmos be discerned as lawful or wrongful? Here Leone's visionary genius resorts to the paradoxical conception of a relativity in God's supreme perfection, a relativity which according to Neo-Platonic ideas recurs in every sphere of the existing world. The higher, although perfect in itself, requires that the lower be more perfect. Thus God needs the world. 'There is neither perfection nor beauty which could not grow by communicating itself.' Leone takes up an old Jewish tradition: into this order of aesthetic values he introduces lawful and wrongful behaviour, and thereby rounds off his system. The one who acts lawfully contributes to the perfection of God, to the perfection of Beauty: doing this he is just: '... l'uomo giusto fa perfetto il splendore de la divinità, & l'iniquo il macula . . .' — the just make perfect the splendour of the deity, and the unjust spoil it.

Uriel da Costa emphatically belongs to the better-known figures of the modern history of thought since Pierre Bayle in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* first published a short biography of this ill-fated man. In the nineteenth century, Karl Gutzkow, by glorifying Uriel in the novel *Der Sadduccaer von Amsterdam* (1835) and in the play *Uriel Acosta* (1847), made his name familiar.

Uriel da Costa was 'Marrano', 'nuevo Cristiano'. He belonged to that part of the Jewish population in Spain which after the edict of 1492, chose to adopt the new faith — with much mental reservation of course. Da Costa was probably born in 1585 at Oporto. He pursued theological studies for some time and even took the lower orders. Two generations had passed since the compulsory baptism,

and among the Marranos there was general ignorance of their own traditions and of the Hebrew language. Secretly they belonged to a religion of which they had almost no idea. 'The Marrano', says Gebhardt, 'is Catholic without faith and Jew without knowledge, but Jew in respect of will.' Their conscience was confused, and as the Renaissance had not touched Spain, its spirit could not help them to widen their minds. This was the outlook of the first Marranos who in about 1600 landed in the Netherlands, where they found freedom of religion and economic security. The motive for this emigration was not only the immediate fear of the Inquisition but also — and perhaps to a much greater extent — the ardent desire of an 'intellectual home protected by the law'.

Da Costa was a gloomy meditator and over-subtle reasoner. A permanent fear of eternal damnation made him devote himself to the study of the Hebrew prophets. There he thought he could find security of existence by complying with the precise and unambiguous 'law' as laid down in the Scripture. In 1615 he and his family, who had also returned to their ancestral faith, went to the Netherlands to receive circumcision and religious instruction. But he was to be disillusioned only too soon. What he found was by no means a pure doctrine, but a curious mixture of Ashkenasim customs with Sephardic accretions. For the immigrant Marranos were too proud to mix with the native Ashkenasim and had called Sephardic rabbis into the country. Uriel came across numerous falsifications and distortions in the tradition; with the ardour of a purist he undertook a critical review. His *Propostas contra a Tradição* were the result. But his honest and sincere efforts were regarded as the challenge of a heretic, and da Costa was put under the ban.

He became self-absorbed and lived strictly according to that 'law' which he had found for himself by interpreting the Holy Books. He became a ritualist dedicated to his own private observances. A newly conceived idea that the Bible was not at all concerned with the immortality of the soul, but only with questions of the temporal fortune of mankind, after a time set him completely free from all the compulsions of conscience. The outcome of this belief was the book *Sobre a Mortalidade da Alma*. But by some misfortune da Costa's adversaries got hold of part of the manuscript before it was printed. A virulent pamphlet in refutation of his views, entitled *Tratado da Imortalidade* by one Samuel da Silva, came out before the publication of da Costa's book. This meant the cutting of his last links with the Marranos of Amsterdam. He was peremptorily expelled from the synagogue, and the rabbis only regretted that there was no Inquisition to which they might deliver up their victim.

Under the impact of this depressing experience the inner process of da Costa's estrangement from the Jewish faith developed rapidly

and resulted in thorough-going nihilism. He gave up his belief in the binding force of the 'law' and thereby lost at once every stabilizing principle; for the positive order, as revealed by God and written down in the Scripture, had been for him the only existing rule of faith and conduct. Having once reached this state of mind after some years of unspeakable suffering, he declared his willingness to publicly revoke his theses. By this means he intended to improve the miserable conditions under which he lived: any scruple about paying lip-service no longer existed for him. But now his own relatives went to inform the rabbis that Uriel secretly laughed at their instructions. Again he was banned and robbed of his property. After seven more years of misery he died by his own hand.

Da Costa was the victim of an illusion. He thought it possible to turn back the wheel of history. He believed in a radical purism which traced tradition back to its sources as a method of averting the downfall of an accursed people. His posthumous autobiography, the *Exemplar vitae humanae*, however, shows something more. It shows the conception — though still vague and undefined — of a God, revealed in Nature, who gives his 'law' of mutual love. The development of a myth or a system out of this conception was not, however, within the power of a broken man — it was to be reserved for Spinoza.

Leone Ebreo marked the beginning of the catastrophe that befell a people. His was a naïve delusion in that he claimed still to be part of the ancient and uniform order of the world which in fact he had already quitted by submitting to an inevitable law of Nature.

Uriel da Costa marked the end of the catastrophe and the decay of the last Marranos to go into exile, who were no longer capable of abandoning their attitude of positivism and who did not venture to take upon themselves the risk of the twofold method of thought within the categories of a law of Nature.



## BOOK REVIEWS

BAUDELAIRE: Selected Critical Studies, edited with an Introduction by D. Parmée.  
Cambridge University Press, 8s. 6d. net.

It was an excellent idea to produce a selection of Baudelaire's critical writings with a view, no doubt, to illustrate, and perhaps to differentiate, a somewhat neglected aspect of one of the most significant *œuvres* of the last century. Part of Baudelaire's originality lies in his intimate variety, the range of which can remain unrecognized even by those who are familiar with his poems. For the notion, propagated by the poet himself, of the *mauvais moine*, the procrastinator of genius, fluctuating between the limbos of horror and ecstasy and spasmodically precipitating an occasional poem of controlled power and unaccountable finish, is as inadequate applied to the man as it appears when confronted by the series of his collected works in a contemporary edition.

The choice offered here is characteristic of the best productions of Baudelaire's secondary function. The introductory remarks are always stimulating even when they suggest reservations on points of scholarship or judgment. The poet's assimilative powers were considerable. His work might be regarded as an inspired amalgam, inevitably attractive to the influence detectives. Dr Parmée is wise not to over-stress the literary debts. Some of them had, however, to be mentioned, and could have been specified a little more precisely. A master key to Baudelaire's mind and art, having special reference to his brand of 'aesthetic', is to be found in a type of influence which has received much attention of recent years, namely late eighteenth-century Illuminism, and above all, for the term is used loosely, the doctrine of Emanuel Swedenborg. When the significance of the poet's variations on the analogical motifs of Swedenborg's philosophy has been grasped, the admiration for Gautier and the veneration (with reservations) of Hugo appear less surprising. For of the pieces on Victor Hugo the one given here is surely the finest as well as the most sustained of all Baudelaire's literary studies, equalled in quality only by the sequence on Constantin Guys. Good, too, but in a different vein, is the short treatment of *Madame Bovary*, with which Flaubert was delighted.

Charles Baudelaire was an incorrigible idealist of an original, if not of a unique cast. Joseph de Maistre, who combined orthodoxy with illuminism in a curious blend shared by not a few thinkers of his period, was another of the poet's masters and is mentioned, though not in this connection, in the Introduction. Swedenborg's name occurs only in a footnote to the text. The doctrine of Correspondences is referred to as a conviction of the poet's and indeed it was. But he is overtly adapting Swedenborg's formulas to his own aesthetic interpretation when he explains the imagery of the greater poets as a reading of the heavenly hieroglyphics. The 'imagists', as we might call them, are the decipherers of the mysteries of the spiritual world. Hence, to repeat, the respect for those imagists *par excellence*, Hugo and Gautier. At one point the same mystico-aesthetic motif invades the presentation of Poe's theories. An italicized passage, quoted as another of Baudelaire's 'convictions', is actually an application of Swedenborgism to the particular idealism of Poe. For the *Notes nouvelles* (the second of the essays on the American given here) are a tissue of appropriations, synthesized and enhanced by a superior style. Moreover it is difficult to appreciate why 'Baudelaire's approval of Poe's refusal to allow the long epic or narrative poem', should be regarded as 'most original', since the modern notion of the superiority, the inevitability, of the short poem did not find its first expression even in the *Poetic Principle*. Baudelaire, it appears, was 'carried by his admiration for Poe rather farther than was really consistent with his conception and tempera-

ment'. The reservation is interesting and specific. It might have been generalized, had space allowed, into a valuable speculation on the efficacy of the French poet's judgment.

To characterize precisely the technique of these studies would not be easy. To read them is to recover a sense of the lost art of good writing, set off with some of the virtues of French style: distinction, discrimination, lightness with gravity, elegance, a touch of rhetoric, something of that indefinable *charme* or spell, considered by Valéry as the differentia of Baudelaire's poetry; and for all their subtleties and digressions, how readable, how intelligible they are! Aesthetic thinking of an intuitive, not the philosophical, kind, yet often theoretical; a species of generalization starting from an interview, a masterpiece, an *œuvre*, and developing into an interpretation full of acute characterizations or profound formulas, exceeding the example in scope and significance. Not practical criticism in the contemporary sense (some of Baudelaire's approbations would not be accredited today), but predominantly positive, the expression of 'admiration' with 'reasons' adduced in support.

What strikes one most is the emphasis on the arts in their contemporary forms. Baudelaire belonged to that generation of true 'aesthetes' whose attitude, by no means indifferent to morals, far transcended the frivolous acceptance the term came to acquire in this country a decade or two after his death, involving the poet's reputation in confusions of taste and affectations of depravity. This dominant artistic interest Baudelaire shared with Gautier, a poet inferior in intensity but still more various in versatility, the only man of his time to recall the eclectic enthusiasms of the Renaissance, 'le bon Théo', under a cloud just now because he couldn't sing or rave and was blest with too jovial a temperament to be subtly metaphysical.

P. MANSELL JONES

NORMAN DEMUTH: César Franck. *Dobson, 12s. 6d. net.*

Considering the familiarity of Franck's most important works, it is surprising that this should be the first full-length book to be written about him in English. His generally quiet and uneventful life is described with as much detail as is necessary; his output is analysed fully and there are some lively and vigorous thumb-nail sketches of his pupils and contemporaries. Vigour is a marked characteristic of the book as a whole; Mr. Demuth has not unnaturally reacted to some extent against D'Indy's over-devout portrayal of his teacher, and is anxious to give a more human, less ascetic picture of him. And he makes no attempt to deny the existence of a streak of flamboyance in his music, which occasionally appears even in some of the maturest works.

His general approach to the music, however, is full of an enthusiasm which is particularly refreshing at a time when there is a tendency to lay an exaggerated stress on Franck's more obvious mannerisms of style. There are many stimulating and thought-provoking observations, especially in the chapters dealing with the music more generally. The comparisons with Bach and Elgar are interesting, and if they do not always carry conviction, this is due to the frequent use of the word 'spirituality', a quality so elusive that probably no two people will be in complete agreement about it. To the present reviewer the statements that 'spirituality has never been laid at the door of Beethoven' (is this intended as a compliment?) or that 'Franck could not have written *The Dream of Gerontius* simply because it is too spiritual' are very wide of the mark. Surely the essential difference between *Gerontius* and *Les Béatitudes*, at least for English audiences, is the fact that Elgar was a highly accomplished choral composer, and Franck, as Mr. Demuth admits elsewhere, was not. The statement that Elgar was more mannered and less varied than Franck appears to be rather eccentric. But at the same time we have to face

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the fact that the music of Franck has had far more appeal outside its native country than that of Elgar; Busoni was recorded by Van Dieren as saying that 'I may as years passed have been disappointed in Franck, but he has never hurt me as much as Elgar, and certainly not in the same way'. The influence of Wagner's late work, especially *Parsifal*, upon Franck might have been stressed more: his own naive statement that 'what Wagner has done for human love, I have done for divine' contains a grain of truth, if for 'love' we substitute 'chromatic harmony', for 'human', 'operatic', and for 'divine', 'instrumental'. But there was another influence, hardly mentioned in this book, which also contributed much to Franck's style, and that is the warm-hearted lyricism of Schumann. And there are probably many now for whom the most lovable things in Franck's work are those in which his lofty aspirations are tempered by this more human, lyrical strain, such as the Symphonic Variations, the central movement of the Symphony, and the more intimate parts of the *Prélude*, *Aria et Final*.

The impression left by Mr. Demuth's book as a whole is mixed. His impulsiveness sometimes leads to exaggeration, as in the statement that Franck's Symphony is 'much more profound' than any of those by Brahms, and sometimes to carelessness. The analysis of the *Prélude*, *Aria et Final*, for instance, is curiously confused, partly owing to inaccurate references to the musical quotations; and when describing the long counter-melody that accompanies the theme of the Prelude at its final appearance in the work, he points out its fortuitous resemblance to the Chorale of the *Prélude*, *Chorale et Fugue* but apparently does not notice that it comes straight from the coda of the Aria. Here and there are irritating inconsistencies: the *Panis Angelicus* is described as 'not sentimental' on page 183, and as a 'sentimental ditty' on page 185; and of Franck's two early unpublished piano Sonatas we are told at one moment that the first, and at another, that the second anticipates the cyclic form. But despite these blemishes, Mr. Demuth's attitude to his subject, warmly enthusiastic, but not without discrimination, is attractive and stimulating, and has led at least one reader to return with renewed affection to much of Franck's music.

P. F. RADCLIFFE

MAX BELOFF: *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia*, Vol. II, 1936-41, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. *Oxford University Press*, 21s. net.

The appearance of Mr Beloff's second and concluding volume on Soviet foreign policy presents the reviewer with two main duties, neither of which he has much hope of discharging satisfactorily (the material being what it is) without engaging upon a considerable amount of original research himself. That is quite obviously impossible. But the reviewer's duties remain; first he must judge this later and much longer volume on its merits and secondly — by far the most difficult part of his task — he must attempt to assess the value of Mr Beloff's study as a whole. And if he ends by offering a number of disconnected impressions, he must ask Mr Beloff's indulgence.

The appeal of Mr Beloff's second volume is bound to be far greater than that of its predecessor reviewed in these columns last May, though this in a way is a pity. In the main body of his work Mr Beloff traces the course which Soviet foreign policy took from the autumn of 1936 until June 1941. Its development cannot, of course, be properly seen in perspective without some knowledge of the contents of the earlier volume, although, in a sense, the way events shaped from the autumn of 1936 onward gives this volume a distinctive character of its own. Here we see the gradual retreat of the Soviet Union into isolation, an isolation which, as we now know, was only to be halted — and then only temporarily — by the terrible reality of events themselves. Mr Beloff rejects the view,

~~~~~R. J. Cruikshank's~~~~~

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popular enough at the time and still clung to in some places, that the notorious Pact of 1939 represented a sudden *volte face* in Soviet policy. He clearly shows how it fits into the broad pattern of the Soviet Union's political strategy at that period. The implications of the arguments contained in the 'Playing with Fire' article which appeared in *Pravda* at the time of the Munich crisis does not escape him: for it is about this time, Mr Beloff considers, that the Soviet Union first came to accept the view that its purposes would best be served by an arrangement with Germany. The dropping of the 'Great Ukraine' plan by the Germans at the beginning of 1939 paved the way to a closer relationship between the two States; and at the eighteenth All-Union Party Congress of March of the same year Stalin declared his hand: to the Germans, an invitation — 'no very good grounds of conflict exist between us'; to the West, a warning — 'bid higher in future if you require Soviet support'. The Western Powers could not, or would not; and the Pact followed as a matter of course.

That this arrangement was perhaps the biggest single blunder in pre-war Soviet policy Mr Beloff would not appear to deny; that as a result the Germans were actually encouraged to make war there can be no doubt. Mr Beloff's judgment, if harsh, is fair; and not likely to be upset by future revelations. No one will seriously quarrel with his summary dismissal of the suggestion which is still heard from time to time that Soviet delay in ratifying the Pact was in any way connected with a desire to bring about a general peace: Soviet hopes lay, as Mr Beloff indicates, in quite another direction as was revealed by the 'complete surprise of the Kremlin' at the news of the *debacle* in France, in 1940. (The Marxist analysis of the international situation, quite evidently, let the Russians down badly here as on other occasions earlier.) Mr Beloff attempts no real answer to the question whether there was any psychological preparation for war with Germany in Russia itself after the critical month of November 1940; indeed, on the wider question of whether the U.S.S.R. fully realized the imminence and the magnitude of the danger confronting it, Mr Beloff has very little to offer in the way of a firm opinion, though he believes (and he is probably right) that even as late as the third week of June 1941, 'the Soviet Government appears still to have refused to credit the worst'.

One of the most valuable chapters in the whole work, and certainly the most acutely written, is the last which deals with the principles of Soviet foreign policy. 'The most that one can hope for by way of a conclusion', Mr Beloff modestly states at this point, 'is some indication of the general way in which . . . problems of interpretation may most profitably be tackled, and some warning of the major pitfalls that beset the path of the would-be interpreter.' Perhaps the most serious of these pitfalls (though, to do Mr Beloff full justice, he mentions others as well) is to forget that 'for very much of the history of Soviet foreign policy we still lack the factual information necessary before one [*sic*] can proceed to an analysis of motives'. Mr Beloff is not, however, content simply to issue warnings, as necessary as these are; he attempts, with a commendable economy of words, to uncover and explain the assumptions upon which Soviet policy itself is based by way of an examination of various interpretations of it. First, Mr Beloff considers and rejects those interpretations of Soviet policy which stress its 'physical, automatic, and compulsive elements'. Secondly, he dismisses as unsound those theories which attach 'the greatest significance to the evolution of the Soviet regime itself', to its stabilization and stratification, to the emergence of 'a new Tsardom'. Thirdly, he finds that he cannot accept the view that the Soviet Union is simply 'a State among other States, pursuing clearly defined ends by the conventional methods of *realpolitik*'. For Mr Beloff 'an explanation of Soviet policy which dismisses the Revolution would seem to be an explanation which neither the facts nor Soviet writings warrant'.

It is to be expected, therefore, that Mr Beloff should pay a great deal of atten-

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tion in this final chapter to the question of the place of Marx-Leninist ideology in a study which seeks to present a coherent and credible picture of Soviet foreign policy. His assessment of its importance will not be disputed. By virtue of the ideology, he writes, the regime is 'bound to be continually threatened so long as non-Communist States exist': for, since class conflicts 'are beyond all doubt the most important political phenomena in the non-Soviet world' by Soviet reasoning, such States must be 'fundamentally and permanently anti-Soviet . . . because the existence of the Soviet State is in itself a source of strength to their oppressed classes'. In a word 'the basic and inescapable relation of the Soviet State to other States is one of conflict', one in which the outcome is 'a fore-ordained victory for the Soviet State and, with it, the international proletariat'. Mr Beloff makes his point neatly when he says that 'to try to comprehend the Soviet outlook and to dismiss the inevitability of the world proletarian revolution is as idle as to try to comprehend the outlook of medieval man and to dismiss the reality of the Last Judgment'. This is a timely reminder, in case we should happen to forget, that we have not been contemplating, in the preceding narrative, the actions of a State among States, but those of a 'remarkable organization for the collaboration of nations', as Stalin refers to the U.S.S.R. in his lecture *The Foundations of Leninism* given in 1924, 'that living prototype of the future union of nations in a single world economic system'.

It would be foolish to pretend that within the scope of the present review it is possible to convey an adequate picture of the industry and careful judgment that have gone into this valuable work. Soviet policy is never seen narrowly in the context of Europe; it is seen constantly as a policy related not only to the world situation, but also to the internal situation within the U.S.S.R. itself. In fact Mr Beloff's approach is so broad that at times, as in the chapter on Spain, the materials themselves will not always stand the strain he puts upon them and his narrative in consequence becomes sketchy and less thorough. Vague or hasty over-generalizations, however, are conspicuously absent. Perhaps it is inevitable in a pioneer work of this sort that the author here and there should show signs of fatigue, his style becoming flat and lifeless and his summaries of documentary evidence, notably the later ones, all too prosaic attempts at brevity. It would be easy, too, to criticize Mr Beloff on the ground that he lacks Professor Namier's remarkable gift for breathing life into the dullest of documents; but it is more than likely that time alone has prevented him from fully working up his material. Whether he was wise to quote so generously from Molotov's wide-ranging speech to the Supreme Soviet of March 29th, 1940, in a chapter headed 'The Soviet Union in Germany' instead of treating Soviet policy in the Far East from 1939 to 1941 in a separate chapter and including much of this speech in it is a matter which Mr Beloff might consider before a second edition of his book appears. It is to be hoped, moreover, that the copious notes, clearly unavoidable as so much new evidence was appearing at the time this volume was in composition, will be thoroughly assessed and digested and find a place — if worthy — within the narrative itself. At the same time, some points of detail should also be attended to. What, for instance, is Mr Beloff's source for the opinion expressed in the second note on p. 344, that the Polish general Berling was approached by the Russians in October 1940, with a view to forming a fighting force out of Polish prisoners of war in the event of an attack by Germany? The point is an important one. And among misprints to be corrected the following jump readily to mind: the speech by Molotov referred to on p. 291 was given on November 6th, 1939; the date — an obvious slip — upon which Soviet economic talks with Germany 'took a decisive step forward' was July 26th, 1939 (p. 259); and the name of the Soviet deputy commissar of foreign trade mentioned on p. 377 is surely Krutikov? An innovation which Mr Beloff might also consider, if paper can be spared, is 'dressing up' each chapter with centre headings indicating

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the subjects under discussion; in the longer chapters especially this would be of great assistance to general reader and specialist alike.

These, however, are small matters and should not, because they have been dwelt on here, be allowed to detract from the very obvious merits of this second volume of a sorely needed study. For once — a rare thing indeed in this particular field — a coherent and credible picture of Soviet foreign policy is drawn. For once one may gain a clear idea of the ends which this policy serves, and feel, so to speak, its cosmic purpose. Mr Beloff's is thus no mean achievement, and while inevitably it must leave room for further research in many directions, it sets a standard which later authors would do well to aspire to. The excuse, always suspect, that Soviet conduct is an 'enigma wrapped up in a riddle' can no longer serve.

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This book deals mainly with the factors influencing the efficient and full employment of labour. It surveys labour resources and their distribution, the extent to which they are efficiently and fully employed, and the causes of inefficient employment and unemployment. It examines the methods by which labour is selected and trained, the conditions under which it is employed, the amount and method of its remuneration, and the means by which conditions of labour are determined. It concludes with a review of past progress and a cautious estimate of the possibility of future advance.

Within the limits of a book of this size the author could not hope to deal with any of these matters in detail, but he does provide a well-balanced summary of the whole. Unemployment is brought out in its now familiar light of the major inefficient use of labour in the years between the two world wars and, if its prevention for the future is disposed of in thirteen pages, it is true, as the author tells us, that there are many other books on the subject. Despite unemployment and other inefficiencies in the use of labour, the present century has produced an impressive record, which is analysed in this book, of improved conditions of labour, of reduced normal hours of work, and of increasing and more evenly distributing real income per head of the population.

The causes of progress lie no doubt largely in the field of invention and technical advance which are outside the scope of this book, but no small measure of credit is due to a responsible and enlightened trade union movement and to an impressive record of harmony in industrial relations. It is curious therefore to find in this book so little about the trade union movement, even if on this subject also there are, as Professor Sargent Florence suggests, many other text-books. The structure of the trade union movement, the wage policy it is to pursue, the relationship between its leaders and its members, the part it is to play in the productive effort are matters of fundamental importance in considering the efficient use of labour.

The main preoccupation of the trade union movement in the industrial sphere in the present century has been the advancement of the interests of its members by the method of collective bargaining. It would be a mistake to under-estimate the past accomplishments of this method or the degree to which it has achieved industrial peace. These, rather than any theory that it is more democratic, are the basis for the determination, not only of the trade union movement but of all on whom rests the responsibility for the conduct of industrial relations, to uphold it in preference to the method of governmental regulation of conditions of labour. If, as the author suggests, present methods of collective bargaining fail to distribute labour in accordance with national needs and if, therefore, a national wages policy is required, is it not a more hopeful approach to the problem to seek to achieve it by improving the methods of collective bargaining, or even by



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altering the mentality of those engaged in it, than to contemplate that it should be superseded by the method of state regulation? The history of the trade union movement certainly suggests that the liberty to negotiate individually or through their organizations the conditions on which they will accept employment is the last liberty which the workers will surrender, and that it is a liberty which many of them will prefer to the benefits of regimented and planned distribution of labour resources.

H. S. KIRKALDY

### BOOKS RECEIVED

*The inclusion of any book in this list does not preclude its review in a later issue*

A. ASPINALL (Ed.): *Letters of the Princess Charlotte, 1811-1817. Home and Van Thal*, 42s. net.

ANNA DE BARY: *Love and Loss. Bowes and Bowes*, 6s. net.

ELIZABETH BOWEN: *Encounters, Early Stories. Sidgwick and Jackson*, 7s. 6d. net.

CRANE BRINTON: *English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century. Benn*, 15s. net.

H. BUTTERFIELD: *Christianity and History: the Broadcast Lectures in expanded form. Bell*, 7s. 6d. net.

H. BUTTERFIELD: *George III, Lord North and the People, 1779-1780. Bell*, 30s. net.

F. M. CORNFORD: *Microcosmographia Academica, being a Guide for the Young Academic Politician, with a Foreword by W. K. C. Guthrie. Bowes and Bowes*, 4s. 6d. net.

JULES DÉCHAMPS: *Les Iles Britanniques et la Révolution Française (1789-1803). La Renaissance du Livre*.

ELIE HALÉVY: *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. II, The Liberal Awakening 1815-1830, translated from the French by E. I. Watkin. Benn*, 18s. net.

LAWRENCE AND E. M. HANSON: *The Four Brontës. Oxford University Press*, 25s. net.

### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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